NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

UNITED STATES–ISRAELI RELATIONS: THE IMPACT ON U.S. NATIONAL INTERESTS

by

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June 2007

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		*Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188*
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.		
1. AGENCY USE ONLY *(Leave blank)*	**2. REPORT DATE** June 2007	**3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED** Master's Thesis
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE United States-Israeli Relations: The Impact on U.S. National Interests		**5. FUNDING NUMBERS**
6. AUTHOR(S) Lawrence M. Walzer		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000		**8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER**
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A		**10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER**
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.		
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited		**12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE**
13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words) This thesis assesses the effect of the United States' relationship with Israel on U.S. foreign policy objectives in the Middle East. I conduct an analysis of U.S. interests and relations in the Middle East, separate from considerations of domestic politics, to determine whether U.S. foreign policies in fact further national interests. I analyze three U.S. national interests in the Middle East: (1) nonproliferation of WMD, (2) spreading democracy, and (3) combating terrorism respective to Iran, Syria, and Egypt to conclude whether the national interest is positively, negatively, or negligibly affected by the U.S.–Israeli relationship. While the thesis highlights possible interests and areas where U.S. national interests are not well-served by the U.S.–Israeli relationship, the thesis does not conclude that the U.S. should withdraw support of Israel. It is in U.S. interests to support the existence of its allies. However, the thesis does conclude that greater objective debate should take place to assess the U.S.–Israeli relationship with respect to other U.S. national interests in the Middle East to ensure U.S. national security is best served by current policies.		
14. SUBJECT TERMS Israel, Iran, Syria, Egypt, national interests, Middle East, Arab-Israeli conflict, democracy, terrorism, proliferation		**15. NUMBER OF PAGES** 109
		16. PRICE CODE
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	**18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE** Unclassified	**19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT** Unclassified	**20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT** UL

i

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**UNITED STATES–ISRAELI RELATIONS:
THE IMPACT ON U.S. NATIONAL INTERESTS**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
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ABSTRACT

This thesis assesses the effect of the United States' relationship with Israel on U.S. foreign policy objectives in the Middle East. I conduct an analysis of U.S. interests and relations in the Middle East, separate from considerations of domestic politics, to determine whether U.S. foreign policies in fact further national interests. I analyze three U.S. national interests in the Middle East: (1) nonproliferation of WMD, (2) spreading democracy, and (3) combating terrorism respective to Iran, Syria, and Egypt to conclude whether the national interest is positively, negatively, or negligibly affected by the U.S.–Israeli relationship. While the thesis highlights possible interests and areas where U.S. national interests are not well-served by the U.S.–Israeli relationship, the thesis does not conclude that the U.S. should withdraw support of Israel. It is in U.S. interests to support the existence of its allies. However, the thesis does conclude that greater objective debate should take place to assess the U.S.–Israeli relationship with respect to other U.S. national interests in the Middle East to ensure U.S. national security is best served by current policies.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For their guidance and patience in the preparation of this thesis, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation and thanks to Doctor Anne Marine Baylouny and Doctor Jeffrey Knopf. I would also like to thank Janis Higginbotham for her professional editing, formatting, and timeliness. Finally, I wish to extend my deepest gratitude to my wife, Lynn, for her steadfast support throughout my time at the Naval Postgraduate School.

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I.   INTRODUCTION

A.   THESIS AND MAJOR ARGUMENTS

The Middle East contains a significant amount of the world's oil, is plagued with violence and instability, and breeds terrorism and anti-Americanism. It also contains regimes hostile to the U.S., with active Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) programs. In early 2006, Professors John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt published a controversial working paper claiming the "Israeli Lobby" has excessive influence on United States foreign policy, which may be detrimental to our interests.[1] The United States' relationship with Israel is widely perceived to be overly supportive and uncritical to the extent that the United States is not viewed as diplomatically even-handed in the Middle East. References to the United States–Israeli relationship refer to this perception and the thesis seeks to conduct an objective analysis of how that perception affects our national interests in the Middle East. To advance the cause of national security, I conduct an analysis of U.S. interests and relations in the Middle East, separate from considerations of domestic politics, to determine whether U.S. foreign policies in fact further national interests. The purpose of this thesis is to assess the effect of the United States' relationship with Israel on U.S. foreign policy objectives in the Middle East. To do so, I analyze three U.S. national interests in the Middle East: (1) nonproliferation of WMD, (2) spreading democracy, and (3) combating terrorism. Conclusions from this thesis call for greater debate on whether U.S. national policies in the Middle East achieve U.S. objectives that best facilitate U.S. security.

This thesis strives to address how U.S. support of Israel affects other U.S. national interests in the Middle East. Answering this question entails ascertaining U.S. national interests in the Middle East and the precise nature of the relationship with Israel. After assessing U.S. national interests in the Middle East and the U.S. relationship with Israel, the thesis investigates three interests that could be affected by the Israeli relationship

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[1] John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, KSG Faculty Research Working Paper RWP, 06-011 (Harvard University, March 2006).

(nonproliferation of WMD, spreading democracy, and combating terrorism) by assessing each national interest in relation to three states in the region: Iran, Syria, and Egypt.

I conclude that the U.S. relationship with Israel may negatively impact the U.S. national interests of preventing proliferation of WMD in the Middle East and combating international terrorism, while having a somewhat negligible impact on the U.S. national interest of democracy promotion. While an overall conclusion on the impact of the U.S.–Israeli relationship on U.S. national security is outside the scope of this thesis, the thesis does assess the relationship in a manner that should be further studied, outside the scope of domestic politics, and within the purview that seeks the greatest security for the United States.

B.   FOREIGN POLICY AND THE NATIONAL INTEREST

To discuss U.S. foreign policy and national interests, it is necessary to define the terms. Foreign policy can be described as "the policy of a nation that encompasses all official relations with other countries…for the United States, the purpose is to pursue national interests, prevent conditions detrimental to the United States, and maintain relations with other countries in order to create conditions favorable to our national interests."[2] The concept of national interest is more troubling since, as William Quandt explains, any definition of the national interest must contain strong subjective elements. Objective yardsticks may not exist to determine interests, and several interests may compete (the Arab-Israeli conflict is an example) to compound policy making problems.[3] As Hastedt points out, the concept of national interest may be employed to describe goals and values sought in a foreign policy, or normatively to add emphasis on values and goals not being pursued by policymakers. He surmises that "the U.S. national interest is whatever U.S. policy makers are willing to make sacrifices to achieve."[4] A more helpful

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[2] Sam Charles Sarkesian, John Allen Williams and Stephen J. Cimbala, *U.S. National Security: Policymakers, Processes, and Politics*, 3rd ed. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 13.

[3] William Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press), 11.

[4] Glenn P. Hastedt, *American Foreign Policy: Past, Present, Future*, 5th ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J: Prentice Hall, 2003), 24.

way to think of national interests is to first delineate vital interests such as protecting the homeland and related issues. Second would be critical interests, areas, and issues not posing a threat to the homeland, but with the propensity in the long run to become a first-order priority. Third would be serious interests that do not affect vital or critical interests "...yet cast some shadow over such interests. [Indeed,] U.S. efforts are focused on creating favorable conditions to preclude Third Order events from developing into higher-order ones... [and finally] all other interests are peripheral."[5] During the Cold War, identifying the national interest was simple: containing the communist Soviet Union. Today, it is more difficult. It appears that more normative terms are being used to describe the national interest, such as promoting peace, prosperity, and freedom. Regardless, this thesis uses the term *national interest* to describe tasks, goals, objectives, values, or interests that further the security and prosperity of the United States, with the assumption that benefits to others as a result of our pursuit of national interests are, as Condoleezza Rice describes them, "second order."[6]

C. U.S. NATIONAL INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Since the United States became concerned with the Middle East after World War II, the U.S. interests in the region have been somewhat stable. As Stansfield Turner noted, "from the 1940s to 2001, the United States has pursued the twin objectives in the Middle East of political stability to ensure the flow of oil and political survival of Israel."[7] An additional interest of even greater importance in the Middle East was to contain Soviet influence during the Cold War. This global interest was often the overriding interest of U.S. foreign policy in the world, and regional interests were secondary. Ibrahim argued that another U.S. national interest in the Middle East was to oppose radical nationalism, such as Nasser in Egypt, and to promote further Arab

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[5] Sarkesian, Williams and Cimbala, *U.S. National Security: Policymakers, Processes, and Politics*, 331.

[6] Condoleezza Rice, "Campaign 2000: Promoting the National Interest," *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2000).

[7] Stansfield Turner, "The Critical Nature of U.S. Policy in the Middle East," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (2003), 47.

disunity.[8] Tillman argued that a U.S. national interest in the Middle East was to align U.S. principles of peaceful settlement of disputes and the right of self-determination to the Arab-Israeli conflict.[9] The United States sought stability, access to oil, containment of Soviet influence, to deter Arab nationalism, peaceful settlement of disputes, and to promote the right to self determination. As in most regions, the U.S. also sought access to markets for U.S. commercial interests in the Middle East. Recalling the overriding objective of containing Soviet influence, a natural question to be asked at this time is: With the end of the Cold War and the subsequent interest of containing Soviet influence in the Middle East no longer required, how does continued support of Israel affect U.S. interests in the Middle East? Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S.–Israeli relationship has continued.

It is now appropriate to begin the discussion of U.S. national interests in the Middle East anew. I begin with the statements of Condoleezza Rice during the campaign period before the Bush Administration entered office, then extract national interests derived from the current National Security Strategy, and conclude with some inputs and criticisms from scholars and former U.S. government officials. Rice, in 2000, defined the national interest as spreading peace, freedom and prosperity — with peace as the precondition. She asserted that the Middle East is a region of "core interest," acknowledged the U.S. as the sole guarantor of stability and peace in the world, and stated that the U.S. under Republican leadership would be internationalist; it would pursue U.S. interests (not the interest of the "illusory" international community) in concert with U.S. values leading to a world that is more prosperous, democratic, and peaceful.[10] In March 2006, President Bush published his second National Security Strategy (NSS) in which he rested national security on the two pillars of first promoting freedom, justice, and human dignity, and second confronting today's challenges by

    [8] Ibrahim I. Ibrahim, "The American-Israeli Alliance: Raison d'Etat Revisited," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 15, no. 3 (Spring 1986), 23-25.

    [9] Seth P. Tillman, *The United States in the Middle East, Interests and Obstacles* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 333.

    [10] Condoleezza Rice, "Campaign 2000: Promoting the National Interest," *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2000).

leading the growing community of democracies.[11] The NSS outlines a number of "essential tasks" which, in this paper, will be called "national interests." Those most pertinent to the topic of this thesis are to:

- "Strengthen alliances to defeat global terrorism and work to prevent attacks against us and our friends;

- Work with others to defuse regional conflicts;

- Prevent our enemies from threatening us, our allies, and our friends with weapons of mass destruction (WMD);

- [and] Expand the circle of development by opening societies and building the infrastructure of democracy."[12]

A scholar's perspective on American interests is provided by Stephen Walt as he identified U.S. policy goals in the post 9/11 era as, "discourage security competition..., prevent the emergence of hostile great powers, promote a more open world economy, inhibit the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and expand democracy and respect for human rights...[while] the campaign against global terrorism is now the central aim of U.S. foreign and defense policy, and other international goals will be subordinated to this broad objective."[13] U.S. interest in Middle East oil is puzzlingly missing from the 2006 NSS.

One cannot talk of the Middle East and national interest without mentioning oil. However, despite the strategic value of Middle East and North Africa (MENA), with its 68 percent of all the world's oil reserves, as Cordesman states, "The percentage of oil that flows directly to the United States ... has little or no strategic and economic importance.

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[11] President of the United States, *The National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2006), ii.

[12] Ibid., 1.

[13] Stephen M. Walt, "Beyond Bin Laden: Reshaping U.S. Foreign Policy," *International Security* 26, no. 3 (2001), 56-78.

Oil is a global commodity, and the United States must pay the same globally determined price as any nation."[14] Cordesman expounds upon this interest:

> The single most critical geopolitical issue affecting the region is whether the Middle East and North Africa will act as stable supplier of oil and gas exports at market-driven prices... The Middle East is so heavily dependent on the income from energy exports that few nations will voluntarily limit their export revenues.[15]

The Bush Administration interestingly enough does not list the protection of the Middle East oil market as a national interest or a task to be protected in the National Security Strategy. Regardless, it does not follow that Middle East oil is not a concern for the Bush Administration or a national interest. Nonetheless, I have chosen to examine national interests that rose in the aftermath of 9/11, rather than pre-existing interests in the Middle East such as stability, oil, and regional peace.

While the Bush Administration is certainly driving U.S. foreign policy, its priorities have by no means been fully embraced and are not without criticism from both the academic and policy community. Brzezinski asserts that stability in the Middle East should be the primary goal of U.S. policy, due to the region's energy production. He also warns against terrorism overshadowing other interests as, while he acknowledges terrorism as a problem, it does not threaten to take over the world.[16] Jervis goes so far as to describe the Bush foreign policy as "faith based," in that the idea that "more democracies will mean greater stability, peaceful relations with neighbors, and less terrorism, [are] comforting claims that are questionable at best."[17]

In this thesis, the three "national interests" that will be assessed relative to the U.S. relationship with Israel are arguably the most important post-Cold War concerns for U.S. national security. Those are non-proliferation of WMD, combating terrorism, and

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[14] Anthony H. Cordesman, "The One True U.S. Strategic Interest in the Middle East: Energy," *Middle East Policy* 8, no. 1 (March 2001), 117 and 119.

[15] Ibid., 124.

[16] Anne Joyce, "Interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski," *Middle East Policy* 12, no. 2 (Summer 2005), 120-1.

[17] Robert Jervis, *American Foreign Policy in a New Era* (New York and London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 82.

spreading democracy. Democracy and terrorism seemingly lead the pack of interests in the current administration's policies and, "proliferation of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons is widely recognized as the most serious threat to the national security of the United States."[18]

D.   THE U.S.–ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP

In 1948, the United States was the first country to recognize Israel. Much has been written about this relationship, which has been coined "passionate," "special" and "strategic." The works of Charles D. Smith, Donald Neff and William Quandt cover the history of Israel and the region to include the details of U.S. diplomacy and foreign policy.[19] According to the Congressional Research Service, "Since 1948, the United States and Israel have developed a close friendship based on common democratic values, religious affinities, and security interests."[20] However, most literature focuses on the relationship itself in a historical context or directly related to the Arab-Israeli peace process. Others argue that it is not only the shared democratic values and Judeo-Christian values that lead to U.S. support of Israel, but also the American public's general, "sentimental affection for the Holy Land, and a sense of responsibility for the security of a Jewish state after the Holocaust."[21] Whatever the normative values of supporting Israel, the existence of the relationship is not disputed. Evidence is provided by the amount of monetary aid the U.S. provides to Israel. "From 1976 to 2004, Israel was the largest cumulative recipient of U.S. foreign assistance, having recently been supplanted by Iraq. Since 1985, the United States has provided nearly $3 billion in grants annually to

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[18] Joseph Cirincione, Jon B. Wolfsthal and Miriam Rajkumar, *Deadly Arsenals: Tracking Weapons of Mass Destruction* (Washington, D.C: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002), 3.

[19] Donald Neff, *Fallen Pillars: U.S. Policy Towards Palestine and Israel since 1945* (Washington, D.C: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1995), 350.; William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967*, 3rd ed. (Washington, D.C; Berkeley: Brookings Institution Press; University of California Press, 2005), 535.; Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 4th ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001), 541.; Yossi Melman and Daniel Raviv, *Friends in Deed: Inside the U.S.-Israel Alliance*, 1st ed. (New York: Hyperion, 1994), 537.; George W. Ball and Douglas B. Ball, *The Passionate Attachment: America's Involvement with Israel, 1947 to the Present* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), 382.

[20] Carol Migdalovitz, *Israel: Background and Relations with the United States* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 2006), i.

[21] Stuart E. Eizenstat, "Loving Israel. Warts and All," *Foreign Policy*, no. 81 (Winter 1990), 88.

Israel."[22] Support for Israel is bipartisan, as former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger remarked, "the support we gave Israel reflected not my personal preferences alone, but the basic national interests of the United States, transcending the accident of who might be in office at any particular time."[23] Most recognize U.S. favoritism of Israel and many believe the relationship goes further for as Neff states, "The evolution of (U.S.) policy has been almost invariably in a direction leading to a closer embrace of Israel's policies at the expense of the Palestinians."[24] In the current administration, Condoleezza Rice has described Israel as a key ally in the Middle East.[25]

While the relationship between the United States and Israel has been discussed above, the purpose of this thesis is not to conclude that the United States should either end or continue its relationship with Israel. The intent of this thesis is to identify how the relationship affects other United States interests in the Middle East. Should the thesis ultimately conclude that the relationship positively affects other U.S. interests in region, debate over the support of Israel should subside; the relationship would confirm the theory that states pursue diplomatic relations to further their own interests. If, however, the thesis conclusion shows that U.S. national interests in the Middle East are negligibly affected as a result of the U.S.-Israel relationship, further research would tackle the question of the extent of the support provided to Israel in relation to support provided to other nations. Finally, should the thesis conclude that the support the United States provides Israel negatively affects U.S. national interests in the region, it would not necessarily lead to a conclusion that the United States should no longer support Israel, or that there should necessarily be a notable change in the "special relationship."

A conclusion that suggests the U.S.–Israeli relationship negatively affects U.S. national interests in the Middle East would call for a greater debate of U.S. national interests in the Middle East. This thesis does not suggest that the United States should

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[22] Jeremy M. Sharp, *U.S. Foreign Assistance to Israel* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 2006), i.

[23] Henry Kissinger, "Friends Forever," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 6, no. 2 (Winter 1977), 178.

[24] Neff, *Fallen Pillars: U.S. Policy Towards Palestine and Israel since 1945*, 3.

[25] Rice, "Campaign 2000: Promoting the National Interest," *Foreign Affairs*.

withdraw its support for the existence of Israel. It does suggest that if there are possible negative effects to U.S. national interests in the Middle East — as a result of perceived support beyond what U.S. support is provided to other allies in the region — then it would necessitate further debate on U.S. policy and national interests in the Middle East. Regardless of any negative findings in this thesis, it is in the United States' interest to ensure the survival of all its allies, and the U.S. is well known to come to the aid of threatened allies, as with the cases of South Korea and Kuwait. Negative conclusions in this thesis regarding the U.S.-Israeli relationship on other national interests in the Middle East do not affect the national interest of supporting the security of Israel.

E.   SUMMARY OF LITERATURE ON U.S.–ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP

The motivation inspiring this thesis is the strong desire to learn about the Israel-Arab conflict, coupled with a pragmatic realist perspective that U.S. foreign policy should be driven to support U.S. interests. I have provided a review of existing literature on the U.S.–Israeli relationship and have broken those works down into three categories: post-9/11, post-Cold War, and Cold War eras. Works focusing on the peace process, the Iraq War and not specifically on the U.S.–Israeli relationship in its entirety will not be included. The review will begin with the most recent works focusing on the Mearsheimer-Walt working paper, which boldly declared that the U.S.'s unwavering support of Israel jeopardizes U.S. security and called for more debate on U.S. national interests in the region and on the influence of the "Israeli Lobby."[26] While the paper has not broken a "taboo," it has renewed the debate on the issue that has seemingly been quiet for a decade or more, except for a 2003 article in *Social Text*, which will be discussed.

The main assertion of the working paper is that, "U.S. policy in the region (ME) is due almost entirely to U.S. domestic politics, and especially the activities of the 'Israel Lobby'…no lobby has managed to divert U.S. foreign policy as far from what the American national interest would otherwise suggest, while simultaneously convincing

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[26] John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (March 2006), 1 and 41.

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Americans that U.S. and Israeli interests are essentially identical."[27] The paper does an excellent job of highlighting the influence of domestic politics and special interests (Israel Lobby) on U.S. foreign policy, as is the theme of the paper. While it also raises questions about what the U.S. interests in the Middle East are, a more in-depth study of how the relationship affects those most important national interests in the region — aside from special interests and domestic politics — is in order. One of the main criticisms of Mearsheimer and Walt is that their argument "exonerates" the U.S. by placing blame for bad U.S. policy not on it but elsewhere: with the Israel Lobby.[28] While many appear to welcome the discussion of the U.S.-Israel relationship, Walt and Mearsheimer also received some very derogatory and somewhat passionate criticism for their views.[29]

While describing the working paper as unremarkable, sloppy, and one-sided, Richard Cohen stated that he did not feel it to be anti-Semitic and argued that Israel deserves the special relationship due to the old argument of "shared values" between the U.S. and Israel. However, he fails to define those values and merely states, "isn't there something bracing about a special relationship that is not based on oil or markets or strategic location but on shared values?"[30] Max Boot declared the working paper to be as foolish as the works of Joe McCarthy and Robert Welch (Welch wrote a book maintaining President Eisenhower was a communist), while also describing it as one-sided for not addressing the Saudi lobby. He concluded that the price of the U.S. relationship with Israel was cheap, for the U.S. never sent soldiers to protect Israel. He noted, "We have sent troops to save, among others, Britain, France, South Korea, South Vietnam, Kuwait and Kosovo. Today we risk war in defense of nations from Latvia to Taiwan, even though there is no good reason why their fate should matter to us any more than that of Israel."[31] A lengthy non-aligned article by Glenn Frankel, inspired by the

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[27] Mearsheimer and Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy,* 1.

[28] Mossad and Chomsky make such comments in, "The Israeli Lobby," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 35, no. 3 (Spring 2006), 109 and 112 respectively.

[29] Ibid. None of the six reviews presented here criticized Mearsheimer and Walt for their discussion of the U.S.-Israel relationship. Most ferocious was a call of anti-Semitism in Eliot A. Cohen, "Yes, it's Anti-Semitic," *The Washington Post* April 5, 2006.

[30] Richard Cohen, "No, it's Not Anti-Semitic," *The Washington Post* April 25, 2006.

[31] Max Boot, "MAX BOOT; Policy Analysis — Paranoid Style," *Los Angeles Times* March 29, 2006.

Mearsheimer and Walt working paper, noted the increase in American support for Israel post-9/11 and suggested that support has also increased from results of recent elections in Iran and with the Palestinians. "Americans have increasingly come to accept the idea that Israel and the United States share not just values but enemies. A Gallup Poll in February reported 68 percent of Americans have a favorable opinion of Israel with 23 percent unfavorable, and that Americans support Israelis over Palestinians by 59 percent to 15 percent."[32]

While the Mearsheimer-Walt paper does declare that Israel is a problem for proliferation in the Middle East, a "liability" in the war on terror, and a questionable democracy, the work makes these broad accusations with seemingly insufficient study. Israel, as a strategic asset, gets a scant three pages, and Israel in relation to democracy is only discussed from the standpoint that its own democracy is questionable. Mearsheimer-Walt assert Israel is a democracy for Jews only, and Israel, in relation to U.S. promotion of democracy, is not discussed.

Another post-9/11 work was by Stanford's Department of History Professor Joel Beinin entitled, "The Israelization of American Middle East Policy Discourse," published in Duke University's *Social Text*. His work highlights the new mission of the U.S.-Israel relationship in the post-Cold War era as having been defined as allies against political Islam. But he does not concur with this assessment, since he states that the terrorism of Hamas and Hizballah differs from that of al Qaeda. Hizballah even denounced the 9/11 attacks, and the group had reason for its attacks against Americans in the early 1980s when the U.S. seemingly sided with Israel in its invasion of Lebanon. He concludes that the unconditional U.S. support for Israel will lead to grief for Americans and the people in the Middle East.[33]

In the early and mid-1990s, some new perspectives on the U.S.–Israeli relationship were published. Paul Findley, a former Congressman, blames the Israel

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[32] Glenn Frankel, "A Beautiful Friendship?; in Search of the Truth about the Israel Lobby's Influence on Washington," *The Washington Post,* July 16, 2006.

[33] Beinin, "The Israelization of American Middle East Policy Discourse," *Social Text* vol. 21, no. 2 (Summer 2003), 136.

lobby for the United States' one-sided relationship in the Middle East conflict, He calls for the U.S. to halt aid to Israel and coerce Israel to accept UN Resolution 242.[34] Findley also notes that Israel has not always acted as an ally, referencing acts of spying and the USS Liberty incident; however, he does not address questions of whether there is any value in the relationship regarding U.S. national interests of WMD proliferation, terrorism, and the spread of democracy. Another book depicting the relationship between the U.S. and Israel is *Friends in Deed*, which chronologically examines the existence of the relationship, but does not address the impact on American national interests.[35]

A valuable work questioning the "strategic" importance of Israel in U.S.–Israeli relations is *US-Israeli Strategic Cooperation in the Post-Cold War Era: An American Perspective*, by Karen Puschel.[36] In her work, Puschel believes the relationship should be just that, a relationship, as there is little "strategic" value for the U.S. with the demise of the Cold War. She concluded that U.S. interests in Israel in the aftermath of the Cold War were spawned out of a sense of loyalty. Her assessment of Israel's strategic importance to the U.S. focuses on its military value as an ally and its location in the Middle East, concluding that Israel is not important for the U.S. in that sense. Puschel's book does not address U.S. interests such as democracy, combating terrorism, or proliferation of WMD.

The Passionate Attachment is a work describing the relationship between the U.S. and Israel since its inception. Chronologically, it criticizes U.S. one-sidedness in the Arab-Israeli conflict, concludes that the relationship hurts U.S. influence in the region, and that the United States should pressure Israel to conclude the Arab-Israeli conflict. U.S. values are not the same as Israel's because, the book asserts, Israel has abused Palestinians for fifty years.[37] None of the books published in the post-Cold War era

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[34] Paul Findley, *Deliberate Deceptions: Facing the Facts about the U.S.–Israeli Relationship*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, Ill: Lawrence Hill Books, 1995), 326.

[35] Melman and Raviv, *Friends in Deed: Inside the U.S.-Israel Alliance*, 537.

[36] Karen L. Puschel, *US-Israeli Strategic Cooperation in the Post-Cold War Era: An American Perspective* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), 184.

[37] Ball and Ball, *The Passionate Attachment: America's Involvement with Israel, 1947 to the Present*, 382.

assess the U.S.–Israeli relationship in terms of today's national interests (outside of an interest in the conclusion of the peace process) in the region.

Several books and articles were published in the 1980s, during the Cold War, which discussed the relationship between the United States and Israel. Four works that argued the benefits of the relationship for the U.S. are positive are: (1) *American Public Opinion toward Israel and the Arab-Israel Conflict*; (2) *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America's Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan*; (3) *The $36 Billion Bargain: Strategy and Politics in U.S. Assistance to Israel*, and (4) *The American-Israeli Alliance: Raison D'etat Revisited*.[38] Gilboa argues that U.S. support of Israel is backed by American public opinion, although not as unconditionally as the U.S. government supports Israel. Gilboa further argued that military support and economic aid for Israel is not supported any more than that of other countries.[39] Spiegel argued that the president and his advisors are most important in decision making on foreign policy, that global interests outweighed regional interests in the Middle East and, finally, that Israel has in fact served as a proxy for U.S. interests — such as when Israel played a role with Iran and the contras.[40] Organski argued that U.S. support of Israel has been a bargain for the United States. The United States sends money and military aid to Israel, and then Israel conducts operations to support U.S. interest — such as limiting Soviet influence and checking Arab radicalism.[41] Ibrahim's article provided an interesting outlook on the relationship between the U.S. and Israel. He argued that the U.S. does act with U.S.

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[38] Eytan Gilboa, *American Public Opinion Toward Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Lexington, Mass: Lexington Books, 1987), 366; Steven L. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America's Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 522.; Ibrahim, *The American-Israeli Alliance: Raison d'Etat Revisited*, 17-29; A. F. K. Organski, *The $36 Billion Bargain: Strategy and Politics in U.S. Assistance to Israel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 315.

[39] Gilboa, *American Public Opinion Toward Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 366; and Fouad Moughrabi, "The U.S.-Israel Relationship," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 17, no. 4 (Summer 1988).

[40] Steven L. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America's Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan; and* Moughrabi, *The U.S.-Israel Relationship*, 137.

[41] Organski, *The $36 Billion Bargain: Strategy and Politics in U.S. Assistance to Israel*, 315; John Snetsinger, *The American Historical Review* 96, no. 5 (December 1991), 1642-1643.

national interests in its dealings with Israel. The U.S. sponsors Israel as the Middle East "policeman" to promote Arab disunity and prevent Arab nationalism by using Israel to act in the role of a proxy.[42]

Three works that countered the argument that the U.S. and Israeli relationship serves the national interest are (1) *The United States in the Middle East: Interests and Obstacles*; (2) *Taking Sides: America's Secret Relations with a Militant Israel*; and (3) *Israel and the American National Interest: A Critical Examination*.[43] Tillman argued that Israel and its security was an interest for the U.S. and that it often supplanted other interests such as adherence to principles of peaceful settlement and the rights of self-determination.[44] Tillman further argued that Pro-Israeli forces, who when efforts were made to push American interests in the Middle East, have the influence to change political issues from foreign to domestic.[45] Green's work is an historical account of the relationship between Israel and the United States. He argued that the U.S. has treated Israel as the 51st state, despite Israel often not acting in accordance with U.S. interests. He cites Israel's attack on the USS Liberty and its nuclear program as evidence. Rubenburg argued that the U.S.–Israeli relationship has not worked in U.S. interests because Soviet influence has spread in the Middle East as a result.[46] Additionally, Rubenburg identifies Israeli interests that are not aligned to U.S. interests — such as Israeli interests in maintaining the territorial status quo and pursuing an ethnically pure Israel.[47] Rubenburg's book is presented in a chronological fashion, using six major events for her argument; however, her argument certainly does not present the relationship from the perspective of current U.S. national interests in the region. Not surprisingly, the sources

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[42] Ibrahim, *The American-Israeli Alliance: Raison d'Etat Revisited*, 23, 25, and 27.

[43] Tillman, *The United States in the Middle East, Interests and Obstacles*, 333; Stephen Green, *Taking Sides: America's Secret Relations with a Militant Israel*, 1st ed. (New York: W. Morrow, 1984), 370.; Cheryl Rubenberg, *Israel and the American National Interest: A Critical Examination* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 446.

[44] Tillman, *The United States in the Middle East, Interests and Obstacles*, 333; John P. Richardson, "A Domestic Problem," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 11, no. 4, [Also Vol. 12, no. 1]. Special Issue: The War in Lebanon (Summer - Autumn 1982), 114-115.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Rubenberg, *Israel and the American National Interest: A Critical Examination*, 446.

[47] Ibid.

written with Cold War interests at hand did not address the Israeli and U.S. relationship in regards to today's U.S. national interests in the Middle East.

The literature on the U.S.–Israeli relationship does not address the relationship from the perspective of how that relationship affects U.S. national interests of non-proliferation of WMD, combating terrorism, and spreading democracy. This thesis is intended to fill that gap in knowledge by presenting the effect of the "special" relationship in a new perspective.

F.   ORGANIZATION

This thesis assesses three national interests that the United States has in the Middle East. It determines that the relationship with Israel should be further studied, outside the purview of domestic politics, and with an eye that emphasizes the security of the United States. The three national interests addressed in this paper are prevention of WMD proliferation, combating terrorism, and democracy promotion. Each U.S. national interest identified is treated as its own case study and assessed with Iran, Syria, and Egypt — each being a case study for each interest.

Chapter II is on the U.S. national interest of WMD non-proliferation in the Middle East and presented by case studies of Iran, Syria, and Egypt. The chapter covers events from the 1960s to the present day. Introducing the case study is a synopsis on Israel's pursuit of nuclear weapons, Israel's WMD arsenal, and then various rationales for proliferation before beginning the three state case studies. The Iran, Syria and Egypt WMD non-proliferation case studies are each promulgated individually. Each country case study is presented in a similar manner. First, the state's estimated WMD programs are presented to highlight what each country is believed to possess and be capable of producing. Second, the state's regional security environment is assessed to determine its threats focusing on its regional security issues. Then, each state's desire to be a regional power is assessed to determine what role WMD play in the state's desire for prestige. An assessment of the state's regional security threats and its desire for prestige determines whether Israel is a primary factor for each state's WMD programs. Proliferation scholars, government reports, international agency reports, and government officials' statements

are all used to capture each state's WMD programs, regional security environment, and power aspirations. The chapter concludes that, although not the main driver for proliferation in the Middle East, Israel and U.S. perceived hypocrisy on proliferation do negatively affect proliferation, especially in the case of Syria.

Chapter III, on the U.S. national interest of promoting democracy in the Middle East, also uses the case studies of Iran, Syria, and Egypt. The democracy promotion case study for each of the three states will be confined to each state's current regime, with the exception of Syria, covering both the Bashar al-Asad and Hafez al-Asad regimes. A synopsis of the factors that make democratic liberalization difficult in the Middle East — from current scholarly sources — is presented to identify the challenges of democratic reform in the region. Each state study is presented individually, first with a description of the current regime and its form of government, followed by an analysis of its regime's willingness to reform. Research on regime policies, statements, and actions is presented to determine whether the state refers to Israel as a threat or to the Israeli form of government as a means to combat initiatives pushing for liberalization and legitimizing authoritarianism. The chapter concludes that the U.S.–Israeli relationship is not a factor in the continued authoritarian regimes in Iran and Egypt, but the relationship does have a slightly negative effect on Syria's regime opponents' ability to implement political reforms.

Chapter IV, on the U.S. national interest of combating terrorism in the Middle East, also uses the case studies of Iran, Syria, and Egypt to determine whether the U.S.–Israeli relationship affects the success of U.S. objectives. The combating terrorism national interest case study is confined to the current regimes of each of the three countries, except for Syria, which will cover both the Bashar al-Assad and Hafez al-Assad regimes. A discussion on the enemy in the war on terror is conducted to provide a framework for the chapter analysis. Each case study identifies each state's relationship with terrorism, its rationale for its position towards terrorism, and the effect of the U.S.–Iraeli relationship on the state's position on terrorism. The chapter concludes that the U.S. interest of combating terrorism is negatively affected by the U.S.–Israeli relationship in the case studies of Iran and Syria. The case study on Egypt concludes that the U.S.–

Israeli relationship effect on the U.S. national interest of combating terrorism only somewhat negatively affects the war on terrorism due to the population's anti-Americanism and sympathy for terrorist groups.

Chapter V provides an overall conclusion of the U.S.–Israeli relationship's effect on other U.S. national interests in the Middle East, respective to the interests and states studied in this thesis. While the thesis highlights possible interests and areas where U.S. national interests are not well-served by the U.S.–Israeli relationship, the thesis does not conclude that the U.S. should withdraw support of Israel. It is in U.S. interests to support the existence of its allies. However, the thesis does conclude that greater objective debate should take place to assess the U.S.–Israeli relationship with respect to other U.S. national interests in the Middle East, and to ensure U.S. national security is best served by current policies.

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II. NONPROLIFERATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter on nonproliferation in the Middle East seeks to identify how Israel's de facto nuclear weapons program affects proliferation in the Middle East. First the chapter will provide a synopsis of Israel's road to becoming a nuclear power, identifying France as most directly involved in Israel's nuclear achievement. The chapter will also provide the United States' diplomacy and response during this time period in reference to Israel's nuclear program. Israel's WMD programs will be identified through unclassified assessments. The chapter will discuss the Israeli strategic rationale for its WMD programs and then discuss rationales scholars identify as those that cause states to proliferate. Then the case studies of Iran, Syria, and Egypt will be included with each identifying the respective country's WMD programs strategic context, and rationale for proliferation. The chapter will conclude with an assessment of the relationship of Israel and its WMD programs to proliferation in the Middle East.

B. ISRAEL'S ROAD TO THE BOMB

While France most directly helped Israel achieve its objective of being a nuclear power, the United States also helped by not pressuring Israel to remain nuclear free and allowing Israel to be the only nuclear elephant in the Middle East and thus ensuring that others will attempt to follow. This section will discuss France's involvement in supporting Israel's pursuit of the bomb. The section will then explain how different United States administrations responded to Israel along its road to nuclear power.

The U.S. was not the first country to provide Israel military arms, nor was the U.S. Israel's primary military partner for the first two decades of the state Israel's existence. After being rebuffed by Eisenhower, Israel turned to France for security assistance. After Nasser secured a deal with the Soviets in 1955 for the transfer of arms to Egypt, Ben Gurion began desperate pleas to President Eisenhower for military assistance fearing a coming imbalance that would jeopardize Israel's security. Eisenhower

responded to Ben Gurion's pleas in a March 1956 press conference, "We are trying to prevent an arms race in the region. Clearly 1.7 million [the total Israeli population in 1956] cannot absorb arms like 40 million [the number of inhabitants of Israel's immediate Arab neighbors]."[48] The devastated Israelis failed to come to grips with such a bleak outlook and contacted the French.

Israel's intent to contact France in reference to nuclear assistance came after the 1956 Suez Canal debacle as Israel had joined Britain and France in attempting to regain the Suez after Nasser seized it in July 1956. As Cohen has noted, "at the height of the crisis, Soviet Primier Nikoli Bulganin had warned Ben Gurion that Soviet missiles could reach Israeli targets."[49] As France could not provide Israel with a security guarantee, the Ben Gurion confidant, Shimon Peres, suggested that France provide Israel with nuclear assistance, which ultimately got underway in a loose fashion to allow deniability of elements in the agreement but in the end, "Saint Gobain Nucleaire, the company that built the Marcoule [France reactor site] plant, would be the primary contractor for an underground plutonium separation plant at the reactor site [Dimona] — giving Israel an unprecedented type of assistance."[50] Despite some awareness by members of the Eisenhower administration of the Israeli and French work at the Dimona reactor site, no action was taken.

Prior to the arrival of President Kennedy, there was no coherent U.S. policy on nonproliferation and the nuclear proliferation treaty (NPT) was not even in the works. As Cohen noted, "John F. Kennedy was the first president who came to the White House personally convinced that the spread of nuclear weapons to new nations would create a more dangerous world and undermine U.S. global influence."[51] Believing nuclear proliferation was a nightmare, "Kennedy pressed Israel on the matter of Dimona during

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[48] Mordechai Gazit, "The Genesis of the US-Israeli Military-Strategic Relationship and the Dimona Issue," *Journal of Contemporary History* 35, no. 3 (July 2000), 413-414.

[49] Avner Cohen, "Most Favored Nation," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 51, no. 1 (January 1995), 45.

[50] Ibid., 45.

[51] Avner Cohen, "Israel and the Evolution of U.S. Nonproliferation Policy: The Critical Decade (1958-1968)," *The Nonproliferation Review* (Winter 1998), 17.

the first half of 1961. He made it clear to his administration that he had a 'personal interest' in the issue of Dimona and considered it a high foreign policy priority."[52] Regarding nonproliferation, a state department memo clearly identified U.S. interests pertaining to proliferation in the Middle East and Israel atomic activities specifically, "the memo defined them (U.S. interests) as (in) opposition to proliferation in general and a particular concern that, in response to Israeli weapons, the Soviets might station nuclear weapons on Arab soil."[53] Although Kennedy did begin arms sales to Israel, he did so in response to Cold War balancing as the Soviets delivered MIGs to Egypt. It is important to note that Kennedy sought to address Israel's security gap by providing HAWK surface to surface air missiles with the conditions of reassurance that Israel would not pursue nuclear weapons.[54] After receiving intelligence information that Israel was close to a nuclear weapon, "Kennedy used the most powerful sanction that an U.S. president could ever use against Israel: if Israel did not allow American visits to Dimona, under Kennedy's tough conditions, he threatened to deprive Israel of the U.S. commitment to ensuring Israel's security."[55] It is unclear whether Ben Gurion resigned as Israel's prime minister as a result of the tensions between the U.S. and Israel but his replacement, Prime Minister Eshkol seemed to accept President Kennedy's demands and, "It looked as if American diplomacy had won in the Israeli nuclear case: Israel accepted an arrangement by which it committed itself, in words and deeds, to nonproliferation."[56] With the death of President Kennedy, the execution of the agreement would be passed to President Johnson.

President Johnson had a long track record of support for Israel from his days in Congress, and he tipped his hand early to an Israeli diplomat in the aftermath of

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[52] Cohen, "Israel and the Evolution of U.S. Nonproliferation Policy: The Critical Decade (1958-1968)," 17.

[53] Ibid., 44.

[54] Little, *The Making of a Special Relationship: The United States and Israel, 1957-68*, 568-569.

[55] Ibid., 7-8.

[56] Cohen, "Israel and the Evolution of U.S. Nonproliferation Policy: The Critical Decade (1958-1968)," 68.

Kennedy's death, "You have lost a great friend…but you have found a better one."[57] One area that President Johnson can be held into account was the failure of ensuring transparency during U.S. inspections of the Dimona facility as, "the visits were halted when scientists reported they were so constrained by Israeli authorities that they could not certify there were no bombs being made."[58] President Johnson avoided the issue of Israel's nuclear weapons program and instead maintained his relations with Israel, pleasing his pro-Israeli political supporters. Another case of President Johnson not standing up to Israel was the Israeli request for 30 A-4 Skyhawks and 50 F-4 Phantoms. As a condition of the deal, President Johnson attempted to secure Israel's support for United Nations resolution 242 and to renew Israel's pledge not to go nuclear. However, the president's position softened when in October 1968 before elections the Pro-Israeli lobby had 70 U.S. senators sign a letter supporting the Phantom deal. The deal was ultimately approved and the U.S. failed to get the assurance of Israel to renounce nuclear weapons and sign the NPT. It is important to note that during this period, Israel had faced a potential existential threat from hostile neighbors, who despite having been soundly defeated by Israel in 1967, had not made peace and in fact maintained hostile relations. The Johnson administration had legitimate concerns for the existence of Israel in addition to concerns of nuclear proliferation, which still had not had established norms. Once Israel's bomb had become a reality, President Johnson exhibited his denial of Israel's nuclear program for, "By 1968, the CIA was convinced Israel had produced nuclear weapons, or was capable of doing so, and informed President Johnson. His response was to order the CIA not to inform any other members of the administration, including Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and Secretary of State Dean Rusk, he made no known use at all of the information."[59] President Johnson's failures in reversing the course of Israel's nuclear weapons program are still being felt today. By the time President Nixon was in office, Israel had been a nuclear power. In September 1969, Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir "told Nixon the truth — why Israel had found itself

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[57] Little, *The Making of a Special Relationship: The United States and Israel, 1957-68*, 573.

[58] Donald Neff, *Fallen Pillars: U.S. Policy Towards Palestine and Israel since 1945* (Washington, D.C: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1995).

[59] Neff, *Fallen Pillars: U.S. Policy Towards Palestine and Israel since 1945*, 83.

compelled to develop a nuclear weapons capability and why it could not sign the NPT —
but pledged that Israel would not become a declared nuclear power."[60] The concept of
nuclear opacity was born and lives on today.

This section concludes that France helped Israel achieve the bomb and through an
ever increasing amount of support for Israel by presidential administrations, it was
President Johnson's administration that neglected to take decisive action to ensure the
Middle East remained free from nuclear weapons.

C.   THE ISRAELI WMD ARSENAL

Despite the opacity, Israel is widely believed to have a de facto nuclear program
but is not a member of the NPT.   Based on an assessment that Dimona became
operational in 1964 producing weapons grade plutonium, Israel is said to have between
530 and 684 kilograms of plutonium necessary for nuclear weapons.[61] Further
assumptions conclude, that with that much nuclear weapons grade plutonium, Israel is
estimated to have between 130 to 170 nuclear weapons or based on more conservative
numbers assuming 5 kilograms per warhead vice 4 kilogram each, Israel would still
possess between 105 to 135 nuclear weapons. Israel, "is capable of delivering nuclear
weapons by aircraft, ballistic missiles, and ship- and submarine-launched cruise
missiles."[62]

Israel is also believed to have both chemical and biological weapons programs.
While Israel signed the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) it has not been ratified.
Having signed the CWC in 1993, "Israeli officials have opted not to ratify it because
Syria is believed to have substantial holdings of chemical weapons and has not signed the

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[60] Avner Cohen, "The Last Taboo: Israel's Bomb Revisited," *Current History* 104, no. 681 (April
2005), 169.

[61] Joseph Cirincione, Jon B. Wolfsthal and Miriam Rajkumar, *Deadly Arsenals : Tracking Weapons
of Mass Destruction* (Washington, D.C: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002), 259. This
work is the reference for unclassified work on the WMD arsenals existing in the world and is the source of
such stated arsenal in each case study and Israel unless otherwise noted.

[62] Cirincione, Wolfsthal and Rajkumar, *Deadly Arsenals: Tracking Weapons of Mass Destruction*,
259.

treaty."[63] As for biological weapons, Israel is not a member of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). The informative *Deadly Arsenals* quotes Avner Cohen pertaining to Israel's chemical and biological weapons programs as,

> A near-consensus exists among experts – based on anecdotal evidence and intelligence leaks – that Israel developed, produced, stockpiled, and maybe even deployed chemical weapons at some point in its history.' As to biological weapons, however, Cohen is more cautious and tentative: 'It would be logical – given the experience in Iraq- that Israel has acquired expertise in most aspects of weaponization, with possible exception of testing. Although highly doubtful that Israel engages in the ongoing production or stockpiling of BW agents.[64]

Israel's nuclear weapons program provides it a decisive security advantage in the region for it is currently the sole member of the nuclear weapons club in the Middle East.

Israel pursued a nuclear weapons program to deter an existential threat and counter its vulnerabilities due to its small size and population as opposed to its Arab neighbors. As former Israeli Prime Minister and aide to Ben Gurion during the initial planning of the nuclear program Shimon Peres stated, "We didn't build this (nuclear) option to get to Hiroshima, but rather to Oslo. We felt that the reason Israel was attacked several times, without any provocation, was because some of our neighbors thought they could overpower us, and we wanted to create a situation in which this temptation would no longer exist."[65] Israel is not likely to give up its nuclear arsenal any time soon, as its so-called formal policy of "the long corridor" holds that dismantling their nuclear weapons will not be discussed before a comprehensive peace is reached with all the states in the region, to include Iran.[66] As Einhorn wrote, "As long as the Israelis face what they

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[63] Miles A. Pomper, "Israeli Officials See Few Prospects for Arms Control," *Arms Control Today* 35, no. 6 (July/August 2005), 30.

[64] Cirincione, Wolfsthal and Rajkumar, *Deadly Arsenals: Tracking Weapons of Mass Destruction*, 261.

[65] Gawdat Bahgat, "Israel and Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East," *Middle East Policy* 13, no. 2 (Summer 2006), 113.

[66] Ibid., 130.

regard as an existential threat, they are going to be reluctant to surrender what they see as an ultimate guarantor of their security."[67] A difficulty in the region is Israel's "Begin Doctrine," which contends that Israel will not allow a hostile power to develop nuclear weapons as demonstrated with its preventative attack on Iraq's nuclear site in 1981. The policy seemingly applies to Iran as well for Israel contends, "that Tehran, equipped with such weapons, would step up its support for anti-Israel terrorism, encourage other regional states to develop a similar capacity, and shatter the nuclear non-proliferation regime."[68] As a critic of Israel's over reliance on the deterrent value of its nuclear arsenal, Bar-Joseph writes that other than Iraq not launching non-conventional Scuds, for which it cannot be determined whether this was due to the fear of a nuclear retaliation, "There is no other known instance in which an anti-Israeli action was deterred by Israel's nuclear capabilities. In other words, Israel's nuclear capability is a fine example of a successful response to a non-existent threat…Israel's image as a nuclear state has encouraged other regional powers to pursue a similar status."[69] As such Bar-Joseph further argues that "Israel's nuclear arsenal should be eliminated, to remove the pretext for hostile actors attaining nuclear weapons."[70] Israel is an example of a state's primary motive for seeking nuclear weapons, security. For, as Mearsheimer states, "Israelis often worry that if the Arab states ever inflicted a decisive defeat on Israel, they would impose a Carthaginian peace."[71] Israel sought its nuclear weapons for the most compelling reason that states proliferate: security.

D. RATIONALES FOR PROLIFERATION

There are a number of reasons that states will choose to proliferate their arsenals and pursue WMD. Leading all the various rationales is security. In today's world, "the danger is that many countries might view nuclear weapons as useful, even essential,

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[67] Robert J. Einhorn, "Curbing Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East," *Arms Control Today* 34, no. 2 (March 2004), 13.

[68] Pomper, *Israeli Officials See Few Prospects for Arms Control*, 29.

[69] Uri Bar-Joseph, "The Paradox of Israeli Power," *Survival* 46, no. 4 (Winter 2004), 149.

[70] Ibid., 153.

[71] John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001), 151.

instruments to maintain security in a Hobbesian world where life is 'poor, nasty, brutish, and short.'"[72] It is feared that one new entry to the nuclear club would spark a domino effect, especially in tense regions such as the Middle East. Reasons for pursuit of a nuclear weapons program include "the desire to intimidate and coerce rivals, the search for enhanced security against regional or international rivals, the status and prestige associated with mastering nuclear technology and domestic politics and bureaucratic self-aggrandizement."[73] There are also disincentives for pursuing nuclear weapons as well and they are, "financial cost, technical difficulty, domestic opposition, damage to important bilateral relationships or collective security alliances, and global nonproliferation norms."[74] Despite the disincentives that exist, "there is widespread concern that the calculus of incentives and disincentives has shifted during the past decade, with incentives increasing and disincentives declining. New threats have arisen while the nuclear taboo has weakened."[75] Many states today see their greatest threat from the U.S. as it behaves more unilaterally towards hostile regimes. States also see that there have not been severe consequences for states such as India, Pakistan, and Israel who went nuclear outside the nonproliferation regime. In fact there have been advantages to defying nonproliferation as each of the three countries that went nuclear furthered their prestige, influence, and relations with the United States. To answer the question of how the U.S. relation with Israel affects the U.S. objective of nonproliferation, it will be determined by identifying whether the states proliferate with the primary motive of balancing against Israel.

E.   IRAN AND WMD

While Iran's chemical and biological weapons program were developed as a deterrent to Iraq, Iran's current nuclear program does not exist primarily to counter the Israeli nuclear program but more for its desire to be a regional power and protect its

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[72] Kurt M. Campbell, Robert J. Einhorn and Mitchell Reiss, *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider their Nuclear Choices* (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 3.

[73] Ibid., 12.

[74] Ibid., 12-13.

[75] Ibid., 13

interests from the United States. Therefore, Iran's WMD programs are negligibly affected by the U.S.–Israeli relationship. This section identifies the assessed Iranian WMD programs. This section further examines Iran's security and geo-political position. The section concludes that Iran's desire to be a regional power and to provide security against the United States has led it to pursue nuclear weapons.

Iran is believed to have chemical and biological weapons and is also believed to be pursuing a nuclear weapons capability. Iran is a member of both the BWC and the CWC having ratified the conventions in 1973 and 1997 respectively. Despite being a member of the BWC, "U.S. intelligence reports from 2003 claim that Iran probably maintains an 'offensive biological weapons program,' with the capability to produce small quantities of biological weapon (BW) agents but limited ability to weaponize them."[76] As for the Iranian chemical weapons program, it was started in the 1980s during the Iran-Iraq war and, "The CIA believes that Iran likely possesses both a stockpile of blister, blood, choking, and probably nerve agents and also the bombs and artillery shells to deliver them, which it had previously manufactured."[77] Iran has security concerns and has a memory of being the recipient of chemical attacks from Iran and surely maintains stockpiles as a deterrent from future attacks. As Takeyh writes,

> Iraq's employment of chemical weapons against Iranian civilians and combatants led to an estimated 50,000 casualties and permanently scarred Iran's national psyche. Far from being a historical memory, the war and its legacy are debated daily in the pages of newspapers, in the halls of universities and the floor of the parliament. As the newspaper Ya-Letharat recently noted, 'One can still see the wounds on our war veterans that were inflicted by poison gas as used by Saddam Hussein that were made in Germany and France.'[78]

Israel did not play a factor in either Iran's biological or chemical weapons programs.

The United States has very good reason to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear power. Specifically, "The United States has four interests that could be jeopardized by a

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[76] Cirincione, Wolfsthal and Rajkumar, *Deadly Arsenals: Tracking Weapons of Mass Destruction*, 296.

[77] Ibid., 296.

[78] Ray Takeyh, "Iran Builds the Bomb," *Survival* 46, no. 4 (Winter 2004), 53.

nuclear-armed Iran with a long-range means of delivery: preserving the safety of U.S. territory, retaining the ability to use U.S. conventional forces freely in the Middle East, sustaining nonproliferation regimes, and maintaining the willingness of allies and friends to work in coalition with the United States."[79] Initial surprise as to the capability of the Iranian nuclear weapons program "came in August 2002 with the discovery of the Natanz installation that demonstrated Iranian mastery of the complex process of enriching nearly weapon-grade uranium."[80]   As declared by one of Iran's influential former presidents, "That we are on the verge of a nuclear breakout is true."[81] There are conflicting estimates as to how close Iran is to having the capability of producing a nuclear weapon. *Deadly Arsenals* declares, "If Iran's nuclear activities continued without outside constraint and without outside assistance, it could take several years for Iran to build and operate a fully functioning uranium enrichment 'cascade' and an additional one to two years for that facility to produce enough weapons-grade material for the country's first nuclear device."[82] The latest on Iranian progress on the nuclear front came from and IAEA inspection in mid-May 2007, which "reportedly found that Iran had mastered centrifuge technology to the point where it could make enriched uranium for reactor use and was running at least 1,300 of them, with plans to add more imminently."[83]   Takeyh even concludes that hedging is the only remaining solution as he states, "the best that the international community can hope for at this late stage is for Iran to emulate the position of Japan, a country with an advanced nuclear capability that has not actually proceeded to build a bomb."[84] As the Iranian nuclear program seems evident, it is important to explore why Iran seeks nuclear weapons and how Israel factors into that equation.

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[79] Kori Schake and Judith S. Yaphe, *The Strategic Implicaions of a Nuclear-Armed Iran* (National Defense University, Washington, DC: Institute for National Strategic Studies [2001]), 45-46.

[80] Takeyh, *Iran Builds the Bomb*, 51.

[81] Ibid., 51.

[82] Cirincione, Wolfsthal and Rajkumar, *Deadly Arsenals: Tracking Weapons of Mass Destruction*, 295.

[83] Kenneth Katzman. *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses*. Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 16.

[84] Takeyh, *Iran Builds the Bomb*, 62.

A look at Iran's security environment and place in the geo-political arena discovers that although Israel's de facto nuclear weapons program is a partial factor in Iran's pursuit of their own nuclear weapon, it is far from the leading determinant. One Israeli analyst indicated that the Iranians felt a much greater threat from Iraq, prior to Saddam's ouster, than from Israel and that Iran does not particularly worry about a nuclear attack from Israel as their main concerns were Iraq and the U.S.[85] Israel's nuclear program has rhetorical value for Iran as,

> The alarmist Iranian rhetoric regarding the immediacy of the Israeli threat is more an attempt to mobilise domestic and regional constituencies behind an anti-Israel policy than a genuine reflection of concern. For the Islamic Republic, Israel may be an ideological affront and a civilisational challenge, but it is not an existential threat mandating provision of nuclear weapons.[86]

For many Iranians, nuclear aspirations are driven by a sense of national pride, as such technology would bring Iran closer to its glory of the past. Sagan writes that Iran, along with North Korea and previously Iraq, all believed that "America can be held at bay only by deterrence. Weapons of mass destruction are the only means by which they can hope to deter the United States."[87] It is also believed in some corners that U.S. military actions in Iraq have had an impact on Iranian desires, for "Iran's conservative clerical masters will only see in Saddam Hussein's fate an even greater reason to pursue nuclear weapons in the hope of fending off the United States."[88] Due to Iran's national pride, a desire for prestige, a desire to be a regional power, and a desire for enhanced security due to a multitude of perceived threats (with the U.S. being the primary threat), Iran has been developing a nuclear program. However, neither the Iranian C/BW programs or the nuclear program are driven due to the de facto Israel nuclear threat and,

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[85] Schake and Yaphe, *The Strategic Implications of a Nuclear-Armed Iran,* 77.

[86] Takeyh, *Iran Builds the Bomb*, 53.

[87] Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Revised Debate*, 2nd ed. (New York; London: W.W. Norton, 2003), 150.

[88] Campbell, Einhorn and Reiss, *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider their Nuclear Choices*, 157.

therefore, the U.S. relationship with Israel and Israel's de facto nuclear weapons have a negligible effect on Iranian proliferation.

F.   SYRIA AND WMD

Syria's WMD programs can be directly attributed to the threat it perceives from Israel and the Israeli nuclear program, which results in the conclusion that the U.S.–Israeli relationship negatively affects the objective of nonproliferation in the Middle East. This section will identify Syria's WMD programs, its strategic context within the region, and its rationale for proliferation. The section concludes that the U.S –Israeli relationship negatively affects the interest of nonproliferation in the Middle East in the case of Syria and its WMD programs.

Syria reportedly does not have a serious nuclear weapons program at this time but does have a biological weapons research program with suspected weapons and is believed to also have a significant chemical weapons program and stockpile. As Syria is still in the early stages of a reprocessing capacity, "it seems unlikely that Syrians have reached an advanced level of nuclear expertise that could be applied to a weapons program."[89] The Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS) at the Monterey Institute of International Studies solidly concludes, "Syria has no nuclear weapons program. Nor does Syria have the capability of producing biological weapons."[90] Syria also lacks the financial backing for such a program and has had problems with obtaining technical assistance due to political pressures on potential sellers.[91] *Deadly Arsenals* concludes that Syria has a known biological research program but has not begun any major effort to produce biological agents or weaponize them.[92] Syria is believed to have stockpiled

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[89] Campbell, Einhorn and Reiss, *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider their Nuclear Choices*, 91.

[90] Murhaf Jouejati, "Syrian Motives for its WMD Programs and What To Do About Them," *The Middle East Journal* 59, no. 1 (Winter 2005), 54.

[91] Campbell, Einhorn and Reiss, *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider their Nuclear Choices*, 92-93.

[92] Campbell, Einhorn and Reiss, *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider their Nuclear Choices*, 11.

significant amounts of the nerve agent sarin and reportedly weaponized sarin for delivery via Scud-B missiles.[93] Syria is not a party to either the CWC or BWC.

Syria's proliferation efforts of chemical and biological weapons programs can be linked specifically to counter the threat from Israel and its WMD arsenal. Syria is not believed to be seeking the ancient "Greater Syria" nor does it seek self-aggrandizement, however, it does appear that Syria's pursuit of chemical weapons, "is directly related to its two inter-related strategic objectives: one to deter Israel from attacking Syria, the other to contain Israel within 1967 borders."[94] Syria sought nonconventional arms to provide a deterrent to Israel, since Syria could not achieve conventional parity and will not forgo its chemical arsenal, "unless its principal adversary is also obliged to do so with respects to its nuclear weapons. [The late] President Hafez Asad indirectly acknowledged his chemical weapons program…, 'Those who have nuclear weapons do not have the right to criticize others regarding any weapon, which they possess. If they want disarmament, we should start with the nuclear ones. We, the Arabs, are ready to get rid of other weapons.'"[95] Israel is a threat from the Syria perspective as it views Israel as, "a scion of imperialism, as an aggressive, expansionist, settler-colonial state: Israel colonized Palestine; tossed out one segment of its local Palestinian inhabitants from their ancestral homes; maintained a brutal occupation over the other segment and, at various times, invaded each and every one of its neighbors, occupying parts of their territory, and this in flagrant violation of international law."[96] While many may argue the validity of Syria's views, it nonetheless believes Israel to be a threat and seeks to deter Israel via its WMD.

Syria often seeks the high ground and proposes a nuclear free Middle East to no avail as the U.S. and other states weakly reply that timing is not right for such a move. "In 2003, its two-year rotation on the Security Council was dwindling down, Syria pressed for a new resolution calling for a Middle Eat nuclear-free zone. Several

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93 Campbell, Einhorn and Reiss, *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider their Nuclear Choices*, 11, 13

94 Jouejati, *Syrian Motives for its WMD Programs and What To Do About Them*, 55.

95 Campbell, Einhorn and Reiss, *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider their Nuclear Choices*, 86.

96 Jouejati, *Syrian Motives for its WMD Programs and What To Do About Them*, 55-57.

permanent members, including the United States, found the Syrian initiative ill timed and ill conceived."[97] Syria has also declared that it would not consider forgoing its chemical weapons until there was a regional ban on nuclear weapons. So long as the U.S. sees Syria's chemical weapons as undesirable, the rationale for their existence is an attempt to balance against Israel's nuclear weapons, therefore, the U.S. "special" relationship with Israel negatively affects U.S. interests of nonproliferation in Syria. However, should Syria expand its program in a nuclear direction, U.S. foreign policy in the region just as well as Israel's nuclear program can share equal blame as Asad's primary goal is to remain in power and he may determine that a clandestine nuclear program is the best means to do so. Syria witnessed the failure of WMD to deter the U.S. from invading Iraq. As Syria has been in the U.S. sights for its support of anti-Israel terrorist groups and for its chemical weapons program, should Syria decide to go nuclear, it would be to balance against the threat from the U.S.

This section has concluded that Syria's proliferation of WMD was to deter Israel, therefore, the U.S. relationship with Israel and Israel's WMD program negatively affect the objective of nonproliferation in the Middle East in the case of Syria. While others may argue that Syria has offensive motives in its pursuit to balance against Israel's military might, it nonetheless follows that Syria has pursued its WMD programs in response to Israel's programs. This section further concluded that any additional proliferation on the part of Syria would be to deter the U.S. from threatening the Asad regime. The U.S.–Israeli relationship negatively affected proliferation in the Middle East in the case of Syria.

G.   EGYPT AND WMD

The U.S. national interest of nonproliferation of WMD in the Middle East is negligibly affected by the U.S.–Israeli relationship regarding the Egyptian case study. Although Egypt did develop its chemical and biological weapons in response to the Israeli threat and its activity at the Dimona nuclear site in the 1960s, Nasser was likely to

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[97] Campbell, Einhorn and Reiss, *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider their Nuclear Choices*, 95.

develop such weapons anyway as the self-proclaimed leader of the Arab world, which requires a formidable military with the latest weapons. Chemical and biological weapons were readily obtainable for their affordability and ease of manufacture. Despite Egypt forgoing a pursuit of nuclear weapons, it is technologically capable but does not do so as it is financially challenged. The U.S.–Israeli relationship does not appear to significantly affect Egypt's decision to proliferate.

Egypt does possess both a chemical and biological weapons capability and created such programs to protect against Israel and to fashion itself as the leader of the Arab world. Egypt is not a member of either the CWC or the BWC. It is believed that Egypt began a biological weapons program in the 1960s and the U.S. reported, "by 1972, Egypt had developed biological warfare agents and that there was 'no evidence to indicate that Egypt had eliminated this capability and it remains likely that the Egyptian capability to conduct biological warfare continues to exist.' Egyptian officials assert that Egypt has never developed, produced, or stockpiled biological weapons."[98] Regarding Egypt's chemical weapons program, "Egypt was the first country in the Middle East to obtain chemical weapons and the first to use them…It is believed to still to have a research program and has never reported the destruction of any of its chemical agents or weapons."[99]

Egypt's lack of a nuclear weapons program is an interesting case as Egypt's geo-political standing seems to have many of the elements that would lead a country to pursue such a program. Egypt is a member of the NPT and had signed it in 1968 but did not ratify until 1981. Egypt's evident precursors that could lead a state to pursue a nuclear weapons program are, "It has fought several wars and only enjoyed a 'cold peace' with a next-door neighbor that possesses both nuclear weapons and a significant edge in conventional weapons…it was one of the first countries to embark on a civil nuclear program…Its military has played a powerful, even dominant, role in its political system…heir to a great civilization…[and] It has regarded its nuclear asymmetry with Israel as intolerable and made elimination of that symmetry a persistent, highly

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98 Cirincione, Wolfsthal and Rajkumar, *Deadly Arsenals: Tracking Weapons of Mass Destruction*, 11.

99 Ibid., 13.

publicized objective of its diplomacy."[100] Despite the fact that a nuclear weapons program would increase Egypt's security and increase their prestige in the Arab world, Egypt, "does not presently appear to be pursuing nuclear weapons…"[101]

It is valuable to seek the answer to why Egypt has not decided to pursue the nuclear option and to try to determine what events would push Egypt to taking the nuclear leap, while determining how the role of the nuclear power Israel factors into the equation. It appears that each of Egypt's leaders since the 1960s concluded, "that it would be neither necessary nor desirable to do so [develop a nuclear weapon capability] based on three considerations: the magnitude of the technical and economic challenges involved in the development of such a program, Israel's counter-proliferation campaign against it, and most important, U.S. diplomatic initiatives toward Egypt employing both carrots (including, apparently, reassurances to Egypt that 'Israel will not introduce' nuclear weapons into the Middle East) and sticks."[102] Egypt concluded that the benefits of pursuing a nuclear weapons program did not outweigh the costs of such a program.

As for attempts in the 1960s to develop a program, Egypt was unable to get states to sell them nuclear weapons and after the 1967 war, the Egyptian economy was in too poor a state to spend money on a nuclear program, so all nuclear programs were halted and the priorities were focused on improving conventional forces in order to regain territory lost in the 1967 war.[103] Despite some believing Egypt to be technically capable to develop a nuclear weapons program, Egypt lacks the necessary money, ambition, and has steadfastly held to its strong advocacy of a "nuclear-weapon-free" Middle East.[104] Nonetheless, Egypt has not closed the door altogether as Mubarak hedges, "We do not think now of entering the nuclear club because we do not want war. We are not in a hurry. We have a nuclear reactor at Inshas, and we have very capable experts. If the time

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[100] Campbell, Einhorn and Reiss, *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider their Nuclear Choices*, 43-44.

[101] David Eshel, "Egypt's Nuclear Dilemma," *Military Technology* 29, no. 3 (March 2005), 7.

[102] Ariel E. Levite, "Never Say Never Again: Nuclear Reversal Revisited," *International Security* 27, no. 3 (Winter 2002), 64.

[103] Campbell, Einhorn and Reiss, *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider their Nuclear Choices*, 47.

[104] Kathleen J. McInnis, "Extended Deterrence: The U.S. Credibility Gap in the Middle East," *The Washington Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (2005), 177-179.

comes when we need nuclear weapons, we will not hesitate."[105] Egypt could not afford a nuclear weapons program and instead chose to play a moral leadership role renouncing nuclear weapons in the Middle East, thus targeting Israel's de facto program diplomatically — and maintaining a higher ground, forgoing nuclear proliferation.

When assessing the effect of Israel on a regional state's interest in pursuing WMD, it is necessary to determine what the state has, when they developed it, and why. For Egypt, they developed chemical weapons in the 1960s after the Israeli nuclear facility at Dimona was announced, but also at a time when there were no norms established against the development of such weapons. Egypt's pursuit of both biological and chemical weapons was also due in part to Nasser's vision of becoming the Arab leader. Despite Egypt having chemical and biological weapons, it has currently forgone a pursuit a nuclear weapons program. As Egypt obtained biological and chemical weapons for multiple reasons and has forgone nuclear proliferation, Israel's role in Egypt's proliferation has had a negligible impact on the U.S. national interest of nonproliferation of WMD in the Middle East.

H.   NONPROLIFERATION CONCLUSION

The United States' "special relationship" with Israel and Israel's de facto nuclear weapons program can be assessed as having an overall negligible effect on the proliferation of WMD in the Middle East. Despite, Syria's chemical weapons program having direct ties to its conflict with Israel and having been pursued to deter Israel, the program has existed for sometime and Syria has not been driven to pursue a nuclear weapons program. Egypt also is not regarded as pursuing a nuclear weapons capability and its chemical weapons are traced to the 1960s and Nasser's drive to lead Arab nationalism as much as it was to protect against its nemesis, Israel. More recently, Egypt has expressed a desire for nuclear power partly in response to Shiite Iran's nuclear program, but some experts believe such an outlook provides a cover for Egypt to proliferate, while its real threat is Israel. While Israel may not have territorial aspirations of Egyptian land, Egypt, like most states, would like military parity with its neighbor.

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[105] Eshel, *Egypt's Nuclear Dilemma*, 77.

Finally, one of the more threatening global concerns, Iran's nuclear weapons program, can be portrayed as being driven by its threat from the United States, its desire for power and prestige, and its desire to be a regional power to ensure its own national interests vice being prompted by a threat perceived by Israel's WMD arsenal. Iran believes the pressure on it to halt its nuclear program is unfair and that there is some hypocrisy in the nonproliferation regime. Nonetheless, the net direct effect of the U.S. relationship with Israel and Israel's de facto nuclear weapons program can be assessed as negligible on proliferation of WMD in the Middle East. This conclusion does not mean that there are no other negative effects of the U.S.–Israeli relationship for many countries believe there is a double standard regarding when the U.S. chooses to enforce nonproliferation and when it does not (Israel, Pakistan, India), which can decrease U.S. leverage and possibly lower the amount of support it gets from other countries.

III. SPREADING DEMOCRACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the U.S. objective of spreading democracy in the Middle East and will assess how it is affected by the U.S.–Israeli relationship. The chapter will begin by providing lessons as to why authoritarianism in the Middle East remains prevalent in an era of democratization. The chapter will then conduct case studies of authoritarianism in Iran, Syria, and Egypt. Each case study will begin with a description of the government's structure that allows for the authoritarianism. Each case study will include an analysis of the current regime's repression, manipulation of elections, and any political liberalization movements. Each case study will also assess the impact of the U.S.–Israeli relationship on democratization in the state. Only in the case study of Syria does the section conclude that the relationship between the U.S. and Israel has negative connotations for the prospects of political liberalization. The chapter concludes that although the U.S. is partly responsible for the longevity of authoritarianism in the region, the U.S.–Israeli relationship, overall, negligibly affects the U.S. national interest of spreading democracy in the Middle East. The dominant rationale for Middle East regimes to maintain authoritarianism is to retain power — and the perks that go with it.

B. AUTHORITARIANISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST

An overview of reasons authoritarianism in the Middle East is believed to be well rooted is useful in providing insight as to where its strength is derived. This section will discuss the center of gravity of authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and discuss the four primary reasons that they are able to endure in an age of democratization. While elections are certainly an important characteristic in democracies, even elections in the Middle East, which lack the transparency known in Western elections, can further the cause of political reform. There is often discussion of the importance of civil society in furthering democracy, but some scholars have questioned its usefulness in the Middle East. The section concludes with some useful prerequisites necessary for a state to make

a successful transition to democracy. This section furthers the understanding of authoritarianism and the challenges of political liberalization in the Middle East that will allow a greater perspective leading into the case studies of Iran, Syria, and Egypt.

The study of political reform and democratization in the Middle East is complex, but can provide reasons why authoritarianism remains robust in the region. Authoritarianism has endured in the Middle East for four reasons: the fiscal health ("rents") of the regimes, international support, patrimonial security organizations, and low levels of popular mobilization. Among the four listed reasons for the longevity of authoritarianism in the Middle East, the strong security apparatuses of the state are the greatest factor, and their strength is in part due to the other three factors. Bellin's argument is, "authoritarianism has proven exceptionally robust in the MENA region because the coercive apparatus in many MENA states has proven exceptionally able and willing to crush reform initiatives from below."[106] She further concludes, "…while the removal of democracy suppressing coercive apparatuses is a necessary condition for democratic transition and consolidation, it is not sufficient."[107]

One lesson regarding political liberalization is, "Any notion of a single prerequisite of democracy should be jettisoned."[108] A host of conditions including a minimal level of elite commitment, a minimal level of national solidarity, a minimum level of per capita GNP, and perhaps most important of all, the creation of impartial and effective state institutions must be present.[109] Without such, Bellin states, the result of removing the security apparatus would not lead to democracy, but the rise of a different

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[106] Eva Bellin, "Coercive Institutions and Coercive Leaders" in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, eds. Marsha P. Posusney and Michele P. Angrist (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishing, 2005), 24-27.

[107] Ibid., 37

[108] Ibid., 24.

[109] Ibid., 38.

kind of authoritarianism or even chaos — one has to think of Iraq today as a good example of her forecast.[110] Another oft promoted means to reform is via a strong civil society.

Studies of civil society in the Middle East have questioned civil society's ability to liberalize political systems. Langohr surmises that, "it is time for scholarly and policy analysis of democratization in the region to focus less on the role of NGOs and more on the importance of developing viable political parties."[111]   Bellin also suggests that civil society is not a satisfying explanation for authoritarianism as it is "weak and thus proves to be an ineffective champion of democracy."[112] Hope remains for political reform in the Middle East nonetheless because the region does have elections, which better than civil society can further democratization's cause.

While elections take place in the MENA states, Posusney surmises, "Multiple legislative elections have been initiated by authoritarian Arab rulers not as a step toward making these changes [toward democracy] but as a means to forestall them."[113]   One hindrance to elections achieving political liberalization is that electoral engineering and election fraud pose formidable obstacles to democratization and can prevent the citizenry from pushing for greater participation.[114]   Posusney observes that if incumbent executives feel threatened by legislative elections, they will "alter the rules of the game," as in the cases of Jordan and Egypt.[115]   Nonetheless, a lesson from elections in the MENA region is that elections do offer hope for political liberalization, because "holding contested elections foregrounds the principle that citizens have a right to self-selected

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[110] Eva Bellin, "Coercive Institutions and Coercive Leaders" in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, eds. Marsha P. Posusney and Michele P. Angrist (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishing, 2005), 38.

[111] Marsha P. Posusney, "The Middle East's Democracy Deficit in Comparative Perspective" in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, eds. Marsha P. Posusney and Michele P. Angrist (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005), 10.

[112] Bellin, *Coercive Institutions and Coercive Leaders,* 22.

[113] Marsha P. Posusney, "Multiparty Elections in the Arab World: Election Rules and Opposition Responses" in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, eds. Marsha P. Posusney and Michele P. Angrist (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005), 115.

[114] Posusney, "The Middle East's Democracy Deficit in Comparative Perspective," 8-9.

[115] Posusney, *Multiparty Elections in the Arab World: Election Rules and Opposition Responses,* 95.

political representation… [As] Posusney predicts such activities will increase, and the result should be that blatant electoral fraud will be harder to pull off as time goes by."[116]

The case studies on Iran, Syria, and Egypt will reveal the nature of authoritarianism in these three states. While the will to retain power will be evident in each case, there will be cause for hope in the reform process, at least in light that each state does in fact have elections. Nonetheless, it will not hold that the U.S.–Israeli relationship is an impediment to political reform or a cause of authoritarianism's longevity in the Middle East. The U.S.–Israeli relationship negligibly affects the U.S. interest of spreading democracy in the Middle East.

C.   IRAN AND DEMOCRACY

1.   Introduction

While the Iranian Revolution may have been partially motivated by anti-U.S. and Israeli sentiment, the U.S.–Israeli relationship has an overall negligible effect on the lack of democratization in Iran. The structure of the Islamic Republic of Iran ensures the Islamic character of the regime and Iranian life, and seeks to maintain the principles of the Islamic Revolution. The supreme leaders in Iran control the key elements of Iranian power to the extent that the regime can counter any internal threats before they endanger the regime. Iran implements repressive tactics to combat opponents it deems a threat or decides to make examples of. Despite many examples of fair elections in Iran, there have been significant examples of the regime's intervention that have hampered efforts of political reformists. Although political reformers have held the presidency and the majority in the parliament, they still lacked the power to make substantive change in Iran. Such limited authority to create change has led many Iranians to denounce reformists for their lack of progress. There is seemingly little correlation between Iran's continued Islamic regime and the U.S.–Israeli relationship that would suggest that the relationship hampers democratic progress in Iran.

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[116] Michele P. Angrist, "The Outlook for Authoritarians" in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, eds. Marsha P. Posusney and Michele P. Angrist (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005), 228.

2.   Iranian Government Structure and the Islamic Regime

Iran is an Islamic republic that lacks some key elements of democratic governments. The structure of the Iranian government provides the power in the hands of its hard-liner religious clerics who ensure the Islamic nature of Iran. The State Department notes, "The December 1979 Iranian constitution defines the political, economic, and social order of the Islamic republic…[and]…stipulates that the Assembly of Experts, which currently exists of eighty-six popularly-elected clerics chooses the Supreme Leader based on jurisprudent qualifications and commitment to the principles of the revolution."[117] Keshavarzian describes the Iranian government as "a regime that subsumes principles of republicanism and mass participation into a particular interpretation of Islam privileging clerical rule and limiting the scope of politics."[118]

The most powerful element in the Iranian government is the supreme leader, who is ensured control of the government by a base of conservative ayatollahs. The supreme leader is the guide of the revolution and has been held by only Khomeini and his successor, Khamenei. As Shadid notes, "The guide, a position for life, can dismiss the president, acts as commander-in-chief and appoints the heads of the media, revolutionary guards, military, and the judiciary, all among the most important institutions within the government."[119] As will be elaborated on in the political reform part of this section, the structure of the government has enabled the clerical leaders to block political reform by a popularly elected president and parliament (Majlis).

Beyond the ability to dismiss the president, the Supreme Leader also maintains a degree of additional control through the Council of Guardians. The Council of Guardians has the authority to veto any law and is responsible to ensure all laws conform to not only the constitution but Islamic principles. The Council of Guardians is also charged with

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[117] United States, Department of State, *Background Note: Iran* (Washington DC: ,[2006]), http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3580.htm (accessed March 12, 2007).

[118] Arang Keshavarzian, "Contestation without Democracy: Elite Fragmentation in Iran" In *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, eds. Marsha P. Posusney and Michele P. Angrist (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2005), 65.

[119] Anthony Shadid, "The Iranian Revolution and the Rebirth of Political Islam" In *The Contemporary Middle East*, ed. Karl Yambert (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2006), 150.

approving candidates for the presidency, local government seats, the Assembly of Experts, and the parliament. As the Council of Guardians is a 12 member body with six members appointed directly by the supreme leader and the other six by the Majlis, it has not proven to be enough of a safety net for the conservative clerics.

Ayatollah Khomeini created the Council for Expediency in 1988 for even greater control. The expediency body was established to resolve legislative disputes between the Majlis and the Council of Guardians and places further control in the supreme leader's grips as it is composed of "the heads of the three branches of government, the clerical members of the Council of Guardians, and members appointed by the Supreme Leader for three years."[120] Katzman concludes that the Iranian regime created by Ayatollah Khomeini, "appears relatively stable, despite internal schism, occasional unrest in areas inhabited by minorities, and substantial unpopularity among intellectuals, students, educated elites, and many women."[121] The structure of the Iranian regime does not allow for political reform. Although created to maintain Islamic revolutionary principles, one of which is the return of Palestinians to their former homeland, neither Israel nor its relationship with the U.S., are factors affecting the Iranian government's structure.

3. Political Repression, Elections, and Political Reform in Iran

The Iranian regime uses political repression, manipulates elections by screening candidates, and limits political reform that could alter control of the supreme leader and its founding Islamic principles, thus stifling attempts to instill democratic reform. The *Country Report on Human Rights Practices – 2005* for Iran concludes that numerous violations of rights took place that year such as restriction on the right of citizens to change their government, summary executions, disappearances, torture, violence by groups tied to the regime, arbitrary arrests, and restrictions on civil liberties.[122] The State

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[120] United States, Department of State, *Background Note: Iran*

[121] Kenneth Katzman, *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses* (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 2.

[122] United States, Department of State, *Iran: Country Report on Human Rights Practices - 2005* (Washington DC: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor [2006]), hhtp://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/c17095.htm (accessed March 12, 2007).

Department notes, "There has been some moderation of excesses since the early days of the revolution, and the country experienced a partial 'thaw' in terms of political and social freedoms during the tenure of former president Khatami, but serious problems remain."[123] However, there are still reported political killings conducted by regime authorities. As the Country Report on Human Rights Practices – 2005 for Iran further states, "The government was responsible for numerous killings during the year, including executions following trials that lacked due process. Exiles and human rights monitors alleged that many of those supposedly executed for criminal offenses, such as narcotics trafficking, actually were political dissident."[124] The report further cites the severely restricted freedoms of press and speech, which have been further limited since President Ahmadinejad was elected. While political repression exists in Iran, it does not exist due to the existence of Israel nor its relationship with the U.S.

The Iranian electoral system is structured to prevent political liberalization and is manipulated to ensure the conservative Islamic clerics maintain their hold over the values and power of the country. As Keshavarzian states, "…legal and administrative impediments to free and fair public participation in politics are reinforced by the use of targeted violence and indiscriminate intimidation by multilayered law enforcement apparatus and vigilante squads seeking to control and monitor many dimensions of public and private life."[125] The political repression in Iran exists to maintain conservative Islamic values and political power in the hands of the hard line clerics.

Iran has a robust electoral system that has popularly elected government officials; however, the structure of the system is easily manipulated to limit reformist success. Once candidates are approved to be on Iranian ballots, elections in Iran are often fair. The manipulation occurs with the selection of candidates. Keshavarzian captures the discontent of Iranians: "dissatisfaction with the political, social, and economic status quo abounds…[it] is clear that the majority of Iranians want significant changes necessitating

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[123] United States, Department of State, *Background Note: Iran.*

[124] United States, Department of State, *Iran: Country Report on Human Rights Practices – 2005.*

[125] Keshavarzian, *Contestation without Democracy: Elite Fragmentation in Iran,* 72.

a refashioning of the political relations."[126] After a strong showing in the 2000 Majlis elections for political reformers, hardliners regained the majority in 2004 when "the Council of Guardians disqualified 3,600 mostly reformist candidates, including 87 members of the current Majles, enabling the conservatives to win a majority (about 155 out of the 290 seats) on a turnout of about 51%."[127] The Country Report on Human Rights Practices – 2005 on Iran also reported candidate manipulation in the presidential election of Ahmadinejad, citing that the June election was "widely viewed as neither free not fair."[128] Due to the lack of transparency in candidate selections, "elections have been a means for citizens to either punish the establishment by voting incumbents out of office or expressing displeasure by not voting and implicitly bringing the populist platform of the regime under question."[129] Despite genuinely fair elections, the conservative clerics in Iran manipulate the election system through the selection of candidates onto ballots. Such manipulation alters what would be the popular choice of many Iranians and limits the success of political reformists.

Political reformists in Iran have made little progress advancing political liberalization. As Takeyh notes, "Iran is a case study of how a cynical judiciary working in conjunction with the unelected branches of government can effectively undermine a progressive [and elected president and parliamentary] regime and its reformist agenda."[130] Another issue hampering reform is the timidity of elected reformists. As Kashavazrian states, "Both theorists and soft-liners, including President Khatami, have often been wary of encouraging social mobilization and have preferred a more 'moderate' tactic of confronting hard-liners."[131] Political reformists missed their opportunity, for, "With the electoral debacle in the 2004 parliamentary elections, even the leaders of the reformist movement have acknowledged that their movement has been unsuccessful and

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126 Keshavarzian, *Contestation without Democracy: Elite Fragmentation in Iran,* 66-67.

127 Katzman, *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses,* 3-4.

128 United States, Department of State, *Iran: Country Report on Human Rights Practices – 2005.*

129 Keshavarzian, *Contestation without Democracy: Elite Fragmentation in Iran,* 71.

130 Ray Takeyh, "Close, but no Democracy," *The National Interest* (Winter 2004/5), 62.

131 Keshavarzian, *Contestation without Democracy: Elite Fragmentation in Iran,* 85.

defeated."[132] The state structure in Iran allows for little control by elected officials to implement desired policies over the bureaucracy and the executive powers.[133] Despite the presence of reformists in Iran, it is important to note that they do not necessarily want to overthrow the regime, but they did want "to be more democratic, to reconsider its relationship to religion, to provide security and adhere to the law and to choose an order born of a stable democracy instead of an unsettled revolution."[134] The prospects for political liberalization in Iran are not positive. However, it does not follow that the government's desire to repel reform efforts nor the lack of reformists' success in Iran is related to the existence of Israel or its relationship with the U.S.

4.   The Effect of the U.S.–Israeli Relationship on the Lack of Democratization in Iran

While there is much on the negative relations between Iran and the West, to include Israel, there is a paucity of evidence that the U.S.–Israeli relationship affects the lack of political reform in Iran. Nonetheless, Iran has been steadfastly anti-American and anti-Israeli from the beginning of the Iranian Revolution. As Telhami states, "Even though Iran is a non-Arab Shiite Muslim state, its spiritual leader, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, highlighted the spiritual importance of Jerusalem, and one of his first acts was to close the Israeli embassy and open one for the Palestine Liberation Organization."[135] Indeed as Keddie noted, Khomeini long criticized the shah before the revolution for his association with the United States as it was an enemy of Islam partially due to the U.S. support of Israel, and three top critical complaints for Khomeini were "dictatorship, subservience to the United States, and good relations with Israel."[136] The Iranian Revolution was popular throughout the Middle East after the failure of Arab regimes to

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[132] Keshavarzian, *Contestation without Democracy: Elite Fragmentation in Iran,* 65.

[133] Ibid., 86.

[134] Anthony Shadid, "The Iranian Revolution and the Rebirth of Political Islam." In *The Contemporary Middle East*, edited by Karl Yambert. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2006, 147.

[135] Shibley Telhami, "The Role of the Persian Gulf Region" In *The Contemporary Middle East*, ed. Karl Yambert (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2006), 177.

[136] Nikki R. Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 146-147.

dispel Israel. Muslims believed the Iranian revolution signaled what would become an eventuality elsewhere so that, "No longer would the Islamic world have to kowtow to the West and accept the inevitability of Israel."[137] As Lesch further notes, the Iranian Revolution did lead to Islamist dissent becoming mainstream and building up its support throughout the Middle East.[138] While there is evidence that the U.S.–Israeli relationship was one rationale for the overthrow of the shah, it does not follow that the U.S.–Israeli relationship currently prevents democracy from taking root in Iran. Therefore, the U.S.–Israeli relationship negligibly affects the promotion of democracy in the case of Iran.

D. SYRIA AND DEMOCRACY

1. Introduction

The impact of the U.S.–Israeli relationship has a slightly negative effect on Syria's prospects for political liberalization. In order to retain its hold on power, the Asad regime in Syria is not likely to introduce meaningful political reform. As Friedman notes of Hafez al-Asad's regime, "Asad was a brutal realist with a very limited agenda – survival."[139] The structure of the Syrian government ensures the Ba'ath party rules the country. Neither Hafez al-Asad nor his replacement, his son, Bashar al-Asad, has shown a propensity to institute political reform in Syria that would allow a representative form of government. Such lack of reform is due to the desire to retain power. The Asad regime has denied the presence of both a meaningful opposition and meaningful elections. The regime uses repression to both intimidate and weaken opposition. As with authoritarianism elsewhere in the Middle East, the Asad regime remains in power not due to widespread support and legitimacy but through the security apparatus of the state. Bashar al-Asad (and his father before him) has received support for his foreign policy

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137 David W. Lesch, "The Iranian Revolution" In *The Contemporary Middle East*, ed. Karl Yambert (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2006), 132.

138 Ibid., 138.

139 Thomas L. Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, 2nd ed. (New York: Anchor Books, 1995), 145.

regarding anti-Western rhetoric and the Israeli–Arab conflict. Nonetheless, this section will argue the U.S.–Israeli relationship has a negative effect on political liberalization in Syria.

2.   Syria's Government Structure and Asad Regime

Although Syria is termed a republic, under the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party, it is in practice an authoritarian regime. The United States State Department describes Syria this way: "Officially, Syria is a republic. In reality, however, it is an authoritarian regime that exhibits only the forms of a democratic system."[140]   Under Hafez al-Asad, Syria instituted a constitution in 1973 that included a parliament. However, the parliament, the People's Council, was not provided with real power as the constitution provided the executive with outright control of the government. The State Department goes on to describe the authority of the Syrian president as having, "the right to appoint ministers, to declare war and states of emergency, to issue laws (which, except in the case of emergency, require ratification by the People's Council), to declare amnesty, to amend the constitution, and to appoint civil servants and military personnel."[141]   The People's Council is described as not having any independent authority in that while members of parliament "may criticize policies and modify draft laws, they cannot initiate laws, and the executive branch retains ultimate control over the legislative process."[142] Pluralism is lacking in the parliament as well for of the 250 seats, only 83 are eligible for non-Ba'athist party members. Cleveland depicts al-Asad the elder as having consolidated his authority via both the military and the Ba'athist party that enabled his rise to the presidency, noting, "He himself took the office of secretary general of the Ba'th, thus combining the two roles of head of state and head of party."[143] Batatu also describes the

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[140] United States. Department of State, *Background Note: Syria* (Washington D.C.: United States, www.state.gov accessed March 12, 2007.

[141] Ibid.

[142] Ibid.

[143] William L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 3rd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004), 400-401

elder al-Asad's hold over the levers of power to include security, intelligence, the military, and foreign affairs to an extent where his authority is undisputed.[144] The structure of the government was intended to protect the incumbent regime and was not influenced by the U.S.–Israeli relationship.

While Hafez al-Asad came to power with seemingly good intentions to serve the Syrians, he had no intention of allowing representative governance or of turning over power. The modest background of the Asad family and his rise was a victory for rural Syrians and his minority Alawi Muslim sect. Hafez al-Asad's regime "had a decidedly rural composition and represented the rise of the countryside at the expense of the former elite class of urban-based notable families…(and his officials were)… pragmatic officers and administrators whose goals were focused on the needs of their country in its Middle Eastern context and on keeping power that had finally come their way."[145] Hafez al-Asad rhetorically emphasized the importance of the voice of the people. As Batatu quotes him, "…he referred to the people as 'the source of every authority.' One element, he went on, 'must invariably inhere in all [the political and syndicalist] institutions: the free choice and the free desire of the masses of the people.'"[146] However, Hafez al-Asad believed that the masses were only concerned with certain economic things such as having a car, a house, and a little land that his regime could satisfy - but, "Only 'one or two hundred individuals at most,' he added, seriously engage in or make politics their profession and will oppose him no matter what he does. 'It is for them,' he concluded 'that the Mezzeh prison was originally intended.'"[147] After initial hope and some political reforms under Asad the younger, Syrians and the world learned that things would not change in Syria under Bashar.

Hopes of political reform in the "Damascus Spring" with Bashar al-Asad's regime quickly faded and it is clear that the regime will remain authoritarian. The State

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[144] Hanna Batatu, *Syria's Peasantry, the Descendants of its Lesser Rural Notables, and their Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 206.

[145] Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East,* 401.

[146] Batatu, *Syria's Peasantry, the Descendants of its Lesser Rural Notables, and their Politics,* 205.

[147] Ibid., 205-206.

Department notes, "little has changed since Bashar al-Asad succeeded his father."[148] Many believe that the benefactors of the al-Asad regime seek to maintain the status quo so that they can continue to receive the benefits of being regime insiders. It was the regime supporters in the Parliament that took the steps to ensure the status quo. After Hafez's death, "the Parliament amended the constitution, reducing the mandatory minimum age of the President fron 40 to 34 years old, which allowed his son, Bashar Al-Asad legally to be eligible for nomination by the ruling Ba'ath party. On July 10, 2000, Bashar Al-Asad legally became President by referendum in which he ran unopposed, garnering 97.29% of the vote, according to Syrian government statistics."[149] Bashar al-Asad, despite initial hopes, is not leading his country in the direction of political liberalization.

3   Political Repression, Elections, and Political Reform in Syria

The Bashar al-Asad regime maintains a high level of repression commensurate with the most repressive authoritarian regimes. The U.S. State Department's report on human rights outlines lengthy violations of Bashar al-Asad's regime in a number of areas to include absence of the right to change government, arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life, torture in prison, arbitrary arrests and detentions, and the absence of rule of law to name a few of the human rights violations conducted by the Syrian regime.[150] The report also cites that four people were killed in 2005 in Syrian detention facilities due to torture or mistreatment and despite torture being illegal in Syria law, the torture of prisoners in Syria by Syrian security officials is common. The report further accounts numerous instances of political repression such as arrests of returning political exiles after promises of safe return, family members of persons associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, a person calling for reform on the Al-Jazeera news network, a person carrying newsletters published by an opposition group, numerous suspected Islamist and Kurds, and even a French citizen who had accused Syrian officials of torture. Political repression and rule

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[148] United States. Department of State, *Background Note: Syria.*

[149] Ibid.

[150] Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *Syria: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* (Washington D.C.: United States, Department of State, 2006).

over Syrians through fear continue to be the backbone of the al-Asad regime, even under Bashar's rule, leaving no doubt that the hoped for political reform will not occur under the new regime.

Elections in Syria do not allow for opposition groups to win a majority of seats in the parliament or to elect a new president. Despite the Syrian government highlighting its April 2007 elections as evidence of its democracy, there was little enthusiasm in Syria and only criticism from the United States and the West. The BBC reported that voters have shown little interest in the elections as there is little contest and dissidents are jailed, "a sign of little change in Syria since Bashar Asad came to power seven years ago."[151] The BBC further reported, "Former political prisoners, of which there are many in Syria, are stripped of their civil rights and cannot stand in elections or vote, and the rules make it impossible for any real independents to win."[152] Even in Syria, the opposition emphasized the lack of election transparency and condemned the election as a farce and urged a boycott.[153]

Little will change with the July 2007 referendum for the presidency. For decades, only Hafez al-Asad and now his son Bashar have been allowed to be on the referendum for Syria's presidency. After Hafez's death in 2000, Bashar was elected president, running in a referendum unopposed. The State Department cites, "The late President Hafiz Al-Asad was confirmed by unopposed referenda five times."[154] Bashar is again scheduled to run unopposed for the Syrian presidency in July 2007. The al-Asad regime in Syria will not allow an opposition to threaten its hold on power.

Despite recent attempts by opposition groups to create a united front, the groups have not been able to translate their unity into political power within Syria. One problem confronting all opposition groups is that, as one regime opponent claimed, "the Baath

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[151] "Syrians Unmoved by Chance to Vote," *BBC News* (2007) (accessed April 26, 2007).

[152] Ibid.

[153] Ibid.

[154] United States. Department of State, *Background Note: Syria.*

party has infiltrated all internal opposition groups."[155] The United State Institute of Peace notes, "The Muslim Brotherhood has emerged as the most powerful opposition force, inside and outside the country. It is evolving and beginning to forge important links with secular opposition groups."[156] The USIP briefing further notes that the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria no longer calls for an Islamic state. In late October 2005, a leap in unity of opposition groups took place with the Damascus Declaration.

The Damascus Declaration consisted of opponents to the regime across the political spectrum, who agreed to principles for change in Syria based on democracy, nonviolence, and oppositional unity. Many intellectuals and associations announced support for the declaration. As Landis and Pace wrote, "For the first time in Syrian history, an assemblage of bickering parties and scattered intellectuals representing Kurdish nationalists, Arab nationalists, Socialists, Communists, liberals, and Islamists [all] united under a single platform, for democratic change."[157] Another development escalated the strength of oppositional forces with the defection the former vice president Khaddam from the al-Asad regime in December 2005, as he spoke out against the regime on Al-Arabiya. Khaddam's defection and formation of the National Salvation Front (NSF) was believed to be a greater blow to the regime than the Damascus Declaration, as "Khaddam possesses a personal fortune, a wealth of important connections, and an intimate knowledge of the inner workings of a notoriously opaque regime."[158] The regime responded to the new found unity amongst its opponents by outlawing contact with expatriate dissidents and banning opponents from traveling abroad.

After another declaration of opponents alongside Lebanese intellectuals in May 2006, the regime cracked down on opponents arresting many of the signers of the Beirut-

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[155] Farid N. Ghadry, "Syrian Reform: What Lies Beneath," *Middle East Quarterly* (Winter 2005) http://www.meforum.org/article/683 (accessed March 19, 2007).

[156] Scott Lasensky and Mona Yacoubian, *Syria and Political Change,* United States Institute of Peace, http://www.usip.org/pubs/usipeace_briefings/2005/1212_syria.html (accessed March 19, 2007).

[157] Joshua Landis and Joe Pace, "The Syrian Opposition," *The Washington Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (Winter 2006-07), 55.

[158] Ibid., 58.

Damascus Declaration, two of whom were never released.[159] The regime was able to effectively suppress its opponents from posing a strong challenge to its authority. The al-Asad regime had a boost to its popularity and released many of the oppositional prisoners after the summer of 2006 when the regime and Hizbollah were able to point to success against Israel during the summer conflict. While there are oppositional movements in Syria, the regime does not allow them to gain enough momentum to be a formidable challenge.

Despite political liberalization's appeal to most Syrians, the al-Asad regime does not implement political reforms that would jeopardize Ba'ath rule. Hirst notes that while many Syrians may resent the United States, they may even dislike their Syrian government more so and would prefer freedom and democracy.[160] However as Rabil states of al-Asad the younger, "Bashar is no Mikail Gorbachev; he is not eager to introduce the Syrian equivalent of perestroika or glasnost, which could unseat him from power. In fact, he clamped down on the reform movement that he himself helped launch once he realized its ramifications for the political system."[161] Rabil further asserts that under Bashar, "the political system has undergone no significant institutional change."[162]

Lasensky, Yacoubian, and Jouejati believe the necessary political will of elites to push for political reform is absent.[163] It is further believed that the regime has some factors that work in its favor and allow greater resiliency to reform. These include: the chaos in Iraq and Syrians not wanting the same fate, humiliation at the hands of Lebanese criticism of Syria's role in Lebanon, and the fact that Bashar al-Asad is seen to be standing up to the U.S., which is seen by Syrians as anti-Syrian and not even handed with

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159 Joshua Landis and Joe Pace, "The Syrian Opposition," *The Washington Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (Winter 2006-07), 61.

160 David Hirst, "Commentary; Syria's Unpredictable Storm; Democratization is Buffeting the Assad Regime." *Los Angeles Times,* June 7, 2005, http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=850087201&Fmt=7&clientId=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD.

161 Robert Rabil, *How is Syria Ruled?* The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org (accessed March 19, 2007).

162 Ibid.

163 Lasensky and Yacoubian, *Syria and Political Change*; Murhaf Jouejati, "Syrian Motives for its WMD Programs and what to do about them," *The Middle East Journal* 59, no. 1 (Winter 2005), 52, http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=882843831&Fmt=7&clientId=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD.

respect to its relations in the Middle East favoring Israel.[164] Bashar al-Asad and his team of ruling Alawi elites have not implemented political reform in Syria.

4. The Effect of U.S.–Israeli Relationship on the Lack of Democratization in Syria

The U.S.–Israeli relationship and the Israel-Arab conflict in general have a slightly negative effect on the U.S. national interest of promoting democracy in the Syrian case. While Syrians and the Syrian regime are anti-Israel and increasingly anti-American, they appear more united on issues of foreign policy. Although not the sole reason, the conflict with Israel is one of the rationalizations the al-Asad regime uses to legitimize the Emergency Law in place in Syria since 1963. The relationship between the U.S. and Israel has led to greater anti-Americanism within Syria. Any liberal opponents to the regime are weakened by the strong U.S.–Israeli relationship to a degree that if liberal opponents of the regime received aid from the West in its pursuit for democracy, they would be de-legitimized for collaborating with Syria's enemies. Because liberal-democratic minded opposition cannot receive help from the West in liberalizing Syria, U.S. interests in promoting democracy in the Middle East, in the case of Syria, are negatively affected by its relationship with Israel.

Foreign policy is an area where the Syrian populace and the al-Asad regime have generally the same positions. For the al-Asad regime, Israel is seen as a threat, for in Hafez's view,

> Israel was an expansionist state whose ambitions were underwritten by the United States. He believed that is was Syria's duty to resist the Israeli threat and to work in the cause of Arab unity. Al-Asad's concern with Israel reflected the opinion of most Syrians, who felt the territory that eventually became the Palestine mandate was regarded as a part of Southern Syria, and its transformation into the state of Israel stirred strong emotions among Syrians.[165]

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[164] Lasensky and Yacoubian, *Syria and Political Change.*

[165] Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East,* 404.

Hafez's goal to dominate through military force and the intimidation of Lebanon, Jordan, and the PLO in an attempt to prevent them from making peace with Israel was popular in Syria and helped Hafez to consolidate his power during his early years of rule.[166] Bashar has followed a similar course and is believed to have supported Hezbollah during the 2006 conflict with Israel, to "forestall any move by the small Lebanese army to replace Hezbollah units near the Israeli-Lebanese border, thus helping ensure that Lebanon will be unable to make an independent peace with Israel without Syrian participation."[167] Playing to national sentiment of standing up against the U.S. and Israel, Bashar has "derided U.S. claims of creating a new Middle East and warned that 'future generations in the Arab world will find a way to defeat Israel.'"[168] The al-Asad regime's foreign policy in relation to Israel and the U.S. has domestic support in Syria that emboldens the regime.

One tool the Al-Asad regime uses to repress opposition groups is the Emergency Law that has been in effect since 1963 due to Syria's conflict with Israel. Such stringent laws allow the regime's security apparatuses to oppress opposition groups before they can become threats to the regime. Although the laws were originally intended to allow the regime to combat the threat from Israel, they are used against all threats to the regime including Islamist movements. Syria's state of emergency and continued martial law was justified by the Asad regime with the claim that Syria and Israel were in a state of war.[169] Despite this questionable rationale, the Emergency Laws have been a tool that has allowed the Asad regime to maintain power and repress political opponents. The relationship between the U.S. and Israel helped lead to the Syrian Emergency Law and helped embolden the authoritarian Alawi regime.

The U.S.–Israeli relationship has increased anti-Americanism in Syria, which reduces U.S. ability to influence and empower liberal regime opponents. The U.S. focus

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166 Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 405.

167 Alfred B. Prados, *Syria: U.S. Relations and Bilateral Issues* (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress, 2

168 Ibid., 1.

169 Rabil, *How is Syria Ruled?*

on changing Syria's foreign policy has made it difficult for opposition groups to support the U.S. and therefore receive funds to enable an effective opposition. Syrians want democracy but like their regime's foreign policy. As Landis writes, "Washington's demands that Syria stop supporting Hamas and other Palestinian organizations, while it remains silent in the face of Israeli expropriation of Palestinian land, places the Syrian opposition in an impossible position vis-à-vis the United States."[170] Landis further writes that opposition groups who do have a favorable view of the U.S. were shaken by the 2006 conflict between Hezbollah and Israel as Hezbollah gained heightened support from its success, and al-Asad accused some opposition "of tacitly supporting Israel and opposing the 'Arab position.'"[171] Because of the U.S.–Israeli relationship, the pro-democracy opposition in Syria is weakened and the al-Asad's regime gains support for his defiance of the U.S. and his policy against Israel. The U.S. national interest of promoting democracy in the Middle East is weakened by its relationship with Israel when assessed by the Syria case study.

E.   EGYPT AND DEMOCRACY

1.   Introduction

The democracy promotion case study of Egypt will be confined to the Mubarak era. I will present a description of the Egyptian government in context with its current regime and the form of government in Egypt. I will seek to establish whether or not Egypt, specifically the Mubarak regime, is genuinely seeking democratic reform. To do so, I will assess Egypt's government reforms and the actions and statements of regime officials and agencies to determine the direction of Egypt's government. After an assessment of the Egyptian government's structure and the Mubarak regime, I will then assess whether Israel is deemed a threat by the Mubarak regime and the Egyptian people, thereby providing a rationale for Mubarak to legitimize its authoritarian nature, continue repression, and delay political liberalization. The section will conclude

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[170] Landis and Pace, *The Syrian Opposition*, 62.

[171] Ibid., 64-65.

that Egypt is not on the road to political liberalization and the effect of Israel on Egypt's lack of democratization is negligible.

2.   Egyptian Government Structure and the Mubarak Regime

While the Egyptian government is classified as a republic, one must take a closer look to determine its true nature.[172]   Egypt's constitution dates back to 1971 and the constitution has since had a number of amendments.   President Mubarak's authority derives from his position as the executive and his political party, the National Democratic Party, has dominated the government since 1978.   While the Egyptian constitution guarantees an independent judiciary, Mubarak's party continues to hold sway over courts and most judges. The judiciary is in fact far from independent as evidenced by the state having removed two of Egypt's top judges, "who were stripped of their judicial immunity and detained after publicly charging electoral fraud during parliamentary elections late last year."[173] Goldschmidt explains that the Egyptian judiciary has had some success at independence, for it has "criticized and at times nullified the acts of Mubarak's administration and even supervised the 2000 elections, but it remains vulnerable to pressure from the executive – especially the justice and interior ministries."[174]   The legislative branch consists of the People's Assembly, which is popularly elected and also the partially elected consultative council called the Shura Council.   However as Goldschmidt further explains, the People's Assembly has not had a role in foreign and defense issues, and "Mubarak is far more likely to initiate new laws than the parliamentarians, and even their committees are little more than sounding boards for the ministers."[175] A close look at the Egyptian regime reveals its lack of republican attributes.

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172   United States. Department of State, *Background Note: Egypt* (Washington D.C) accessed via http://www.state.gov accessed march 12, 2007. Each country section has a brief description of the make-up of the government.

173   Jeremy M. Sharp, *Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations* (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service), 9.

174   Arthur Goldschmidt Jr., ed., *Egypt Under Mubarak* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2006), 214.

3.   Political Repression, Elections, and Political Reform in Egypt

Mubarak's leadership has been described as being at times "downright dictatorial," and censorship and repression are regular occurrences under his regime. Huband concludes that the Mubarak regime, while being "…more open than its predecessors, remains reliant upon the military and security apparatus, has no substantial ideological credibility, and has no proven popular appeal."[176] The regime uses Egyptian emergency laws and has "…banned certain newspapers and magazines, placed its foes under house arrest or preventive detention without charges or trial, tortured suspects in police stations and prisons broken up meetings, and restricted political rallies and demonstrations."[177]

In response to militant Islamists, the Mubarak regime has responded with indiscriminate repression, "…aimed at not only the hard-core militants of Jama'a and Jihad groups but also their supports, families, and virtually anyone who had a beard with a trimmed mustache (a sign of religiosity)."[178] The *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – 2005* describes Mubarak's government as having a poor human rights record with serious abuses occurring in areas such as the rights of citizens to change their government, existence of a continuous state of emergency, torture and abuse of prisoners and detainees (including deaths in custody), poor conditions in prisons and detention centers, arbitrary (sometimes mass) arrests and detention, political prisoners, and restrictions on civil liberties—freedoms of speech, press, assembly, and association.[179] Hafez and Wiktorowicz argue that such repression exacerbated the Islamic militancy of Jama'a, as "…violent contention was a reaction to predatory state policies that threatened the organizational and societal gains of a movement, as well as a defensive reaction

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[175] Arthur Goldschmidt Jr., ed., *Egypt Under Mubarak* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2006), 214.

[176] Mark Huband, "Egypt: The Community of Muslims" in *The Contemporary Middle East*, ed. Karl Yambert (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2005), 227.

[177] Goldschmidt, *Egypt Under Mubarak,* 215.

[178] Mohammed M. Hafez, *Why Muslims Rebel: Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), 85.

[179] United States. Department of State. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2005* (Washington D.C.: 2006), http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005.

against an unpredictable future created by indiscriminate repression."[180] Despite the façade of political reform in Egypt, it is evident that the Mubarak regime has no intention of liberalizing to the extent of risking loss of a complete hold over the reins of power.

Egyptians have not had the ability to change the government through elections. Multi-party system and contested elections in Egyptian parliamentary elections have been associated with violence, low turnouts, vote rigging, and fraud. There has been election manipulation to ensure that the NDP maintains a solid majority in the legislature. Egypt has undertaken electoral engineering where the ruling party designs electoral rules to ensure the desired outcome for their party. Posusney identifies Egypt as a case where the regime alters election rules when initial results prove damaging to incumbents.[181] Nonetheless prospects sometimes arise, where one can have hopes that reform will take place. In 2005, Mubarak won a landslide re-election, when for the first time, there was a contested presidential election. Egyptians have now tasted contested elections and will likely push for greater transparency in future parliamentary and presidential elections. However, there were several issues regarding the fairness of the election.

The Mubarak regime, like other MENA authoritarian regimes, has manipulated political reform to ensure the continued reign of the ruling party. The ruling NDP pushed an amendment to election rules that excluded candidates from the Muslim Brotherhood. The amendment also made it very difficult for candidates to run as independents:

> To be eligible, a candidate not affiliated with a party must obtain signatures of at least 65 members of the lower house of Parliament, 25 members of the upper house and ten municipal council members from at least 14 provinces. Given that both houses of Parliament and most local councils are dominated by the NDP, establishing eligibility would be nearly impossible in practice. The amended Article 76 may have introduced the concept of free and fair elections, opposition forces note, but it robbed the concept of all substance.[182]

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180 Mohammed M. Hafez and Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Violence as Contention in the Egyptian Islamic Movement" in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz (Bloomington, Indiana USA: Indiana University Press, 2004), 80.

181 Posusney, *Multiparty Elections in the Arab World: Election Rules and Opposition Responses,* 95.

182 Mariz Tadros, "Egypt's Election all about Image, almost," *Middle East Report Online* (September 6, 2005), accessed via http://www.merip.org/mero090605.html.1.

Further, "The September 2005 multiparty presidential election was marred by accounts of voter irregularities and intimidation…[and]…Only Egyptian citizens who registered to vote before December 2004 could actually vote, a clever loophole given that Mubarak did not reveal his intent to hold the election until the following February."[183] The Egyptian government manipulates elections to ensure the continuity of the Mubarak regime.

Another step to avoid a truly competitive presidential election involved "The most serious opposition to Mubarak, Ayman Nour of the secular and reformist Al-Ghad "Tomorrow" Party, who was imprisoned just weeks before the February announcement and now faces prison time on what appears to be trumped-up charges brought by the Mubarak government."[184] Nour, nonetheless, was the second place finisher in the 2005 multiparty presidential election.[185] Mubarak's rule is said to rival the pharaohs and has continued to erode any remnants of Egypt's liberal parliamentary democracy of the early 20th century, which has "…become stunted by decades of one-party and one-man rule."[186] Mubarak himself claims,

> I had a clear vision of the future of the country that won the confidence of the people and their support last year. I have vision of a modern Egyptian society which preserves freedom, elevates the value of citizenship and strengthens the role of citizens in the political process, a modern developed society that lays the foundations of democracy and supports its day to day practice.[187]

Despite the clearly apparent manipulations in the electoral process, Mubarak still strives to come off as a leader with a mandate from the people as he stated in late December 2006. While Egypt may show a propensity to reform, the road is sure to be painfully slow with steps forward and sometimes back.

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183 Eric Lee, "Confronting Cairo: Changing an Illusory Democracy," *Harvard International Review* 28, no. 2 (Summer 2006), 42.

184 Ibid.

185 Sharp, *Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations,* 11.

186 Erin Moran, "Egypt's Summer of Democratic Reform," *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* 24, no. 7 (September/October 2005), 69.

187 Hosni Mubarak, Statement by President Mubarak the Amendment of Certain Article of the Constitution, 2006, accessed via http://www.2sis.gov.eg/functions/S_Print.asp?ArtId=040105020000000000282&1g=En, (May 2007).

**4.   The Effect of the U.S.–Israeli Relationship on the Lack of
        Democratization in Egypt**

As the Israeli-Palestinian issue resonates for Egyptians as extensively as it does
for most Arabs, it is important to assess its role in relation to democracy in Egypt. A look
at this conflict is important for several reasons. Many argue that it was the original defeat
of Arabs by Israeli forces in 1948 that led to the authoritarianism that dominates the
MENA today. As Kazziha states,

> The new state structures which were established in Syria, Iraq, and Egypt
> were diametrically opposed to any liberal or democratic tendencies in
> society, and sought to consolidate the authoritarian rule of army officers
> and their allies. Ultimately, the Palestine issue provided the new rulers
> with a pretext to exercise full control over society in the name of preparing
> for 'the battle of destiny.'[188]

Goldschmidt more recently asserts that Egypt's Arab identity is reviving in part due to
resentment against Israel for its repression of Palestinians.[189] Such sentiments transcend
Egypt as a recent Zogby poll of MENA countries including Egypt found that Arabs still
see the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a greater concern than the touted Sunni-Shia divide,
as evident by 80% of Arabs stating Israel (and the U.S.) is the biggest threat to their
security as opposed to Iran, which only 6% of those polled claimed to be the biggest
threat to Arabs.[190] Despite the significant amount of aid the U.S. provides to Egypt,
which helps provide subsidies for necessities, "Washington insists on a degree of
supervision far stricter than that imposed on, say, Israel — a stance viewed by Egyptians
as an insult to their competence."[191] Ryan claims that Egypt plays an important role in
the region as they are one of the few governments that all the parties can talk to and,
despite Mubarak's less than ambitious international goals, he has brought Egypt back into
the international fold after its isolation from other Arab regimes after Sadat's peace with

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[188] Walid Kazziha, "The Impact of Palestine on Arab Politics," in *Sociology of Developing Societies:
The Middle East*, eds. Talal Asad and Roger Owen (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 302.

[189] Goldschmidt, *Egypt Under Mubarak,* 211.

[190] Jim Lobe, "Politics: U.S., Israel 'Biggest Threat,' to Arabs, Poll Finds," *Global Information
Network* (February 9, 2007), 1.

[191] Goldschmidt, *Egypt Under Mubarak,* 220.

Israel.[192] Despite a "cold peace" and increasing animosity towards Israel, it is evident that it will remain that way for a time as Mubarak has himself stated, "I just can't afford to take us to war."[193] Regardless of Israel's role in the resultant authoritarianism in the MENA, it does not follow that the survival of authoritarianism in Egypt is due to the continued "cold peace" between the two nations.

F.   DEMOCRACY CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes that although there is anti-Israeli rhetoric promulgated for each of the states studied, only in the case of Syria does the U.S.–Israeli relationship appear to negatively affect political liberalization, while in Iran and Egypt the effect of the relationship is nearly negligible. This chapter highlights that the background to the lack of democratization in the Middle East is multi-faceted. While the chapter did point to each state's ability to suppress dissent via state security apparatuses, several other factors also inhibit political liberalization in the Middle East. Syria was the one case, where the conclusion that the U.S.–Israeli relationship negatively affects democratization in Syria is due to the strong anti-Americanism and anti-Israeli sentiment in the state. Syria is a state in the Middle East where both its populace and its government agree on many foreign policy issues. Political reformists and regime opponents in Syria are denied the resources of the U.S. in its attempt to wield power from the Syrian government and institute reform, thus leading to the negative effect on Syria's ability to liberalize. While anti-U.S. and anti-Israeli rhetoric is also prevalent in Egypt and Iran, the results of such only appear to have secondary effects as each regime can use anti-West sentiment to rally the population's support and divert attention from the state's problems. In the Egypt case study, the opposition resents the regime due to the regime's relations with the U.S. and Israel. While the indirect effects of the U.S.–Israeli relationship in Egypt are not studied, liberalization in Egypt is challenged because if liberalization would occur, the Islamists would threaten the regime. An in-depth study of Iran, Syria, and Egypt's governments

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192 Curtis R. Ryan, "Political Strategies and Regime Survival in Egypt," *Journal of Third World Studies* 18, no. 2 (Fall 2001), 25.

193 Hammond, *Arab Media Coverage of Al-Aqsa Intifada Calls Mubarak Government to Account*, 502.

reveals the nature of authoritarianism in the Middle East that provides insight as to how the U.S.–Israeli relationship affects attempts at political reform. The case studies reveal that each regime is most interested in staying in power and uses whatever means or issues it can to bolster its legitimacy. While anti-Western sentiment is used by each regime to further its own support, only in Syria does the U.S.–Israeli relationship appear to have concrete negative connotations for democracy promotion, while having negligible effects in Iran and Egypt.

IV. COMBATING TERRORISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will assess the U.S.–Israeli relationship's effect on combating terrorism in the Middle East. Prior to the case studies of Iran, Syria, and Egypt, this chapter will present U.S. foreign policy on combating terrorism and examine the enemy in the war on terrorism. The chapter will first highlight U.S. foreign policy on terror in order to capture the breadth of the terror that the U.S. has chosen to confront. The chapter will then discuss the enemy the U.S. faces in its war on terrorism, emphasizing some of the differences in terrorist organizations by focusing on two groups: Al Qaeda and Hezbollah. This understanding of U.S. policy in combating terrorism provides the background for the state case studies, where I identify each state's relationship to terror, its rationale for its position, and then assess how the U.S.–Israeli relationship affects each state's position on terrorism. The chapter concludes that the U.S.–Israeli relationship negatively affects the U.S. national interest of combating terrorism in the cases of Iran and Syria, while being somewhat negative in the case of Egypt due to its populace's sympathy for al-Qaeda and disdain for U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.

B. U.S. FOREIGN POLICY ON COMBATING TERRORISM

The U.S. has made the war on terrorism its primary foreign policy focus and has cast a large net in the hope of reining in terrorist groups beyond those who attacked the U.S. on 9/11. Such overarching goals in the war on terrorism have policy consequences that may hamper efforts to combat what should arguably be the main objective in the war on terrorism: the defeat of al Qaeda and its ideology. In the aftermath of 9/11, President Bush, "vowed to wage war against terrorism, not simply against those who were behind assaults on New York City and Washington…he would 'make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them.'"[194] While such a large net easily translated into a fight against al Qaeda and Afghanistan, such a net was more

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[194] Steven W. Hook and John Spanier, *American Foreign Policy since Word War II* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2007), 317.

troublesome in also encompassing Iraq, Syria, and Iran, whose al Qaeda ties were questionable. The targeting of regimes beyond those who supported al Qaeda directly (like Afghanistan) does not receive overwhelming international support. In the Bush Administration, such support was not deemed a prerequisite for the U.S. fight against terror — in the president's words, "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.'"[195] This policy made it difficult for many regimes to remain wholly supportive in the fight against terror as the U.S. sights expanded beyond al Qaeda and Afghanistan.

However, concern that U.S. policies were emboldening anti-Americanism, and hampering the fight against al Qaeda, did not seem compelling to the administration, due to its views on terrorism. The National Security Strategy states that terrorism does not derive from either poverty, hostility toward U.S. actions in Iraq, Israeli-Palestinian issues, or U.S. offensive operations against terrorist groups. Instead, it comes about through political alienation, past grievances being blamed on others, conspiracy and misinformation, and an ideology justifying murder — most of which can be countered by democracy.[196] Such an outlook on terror rejects any view of U.S. policy as a root cause of terror. Expanding the war on terrorism beyond al Qaeda and Afghanistan provided a rationale to invade Iraq (because of WMD and alleged ties with al Qaeda) and to further isolate Syria and Iran for their support for anti-Israeli terrorist organizations.

C.   WAR ON TERRORISM ENEMY

While the Bush administration desired to knock out al Qaeda, it also wanted to eradicate international terrorist groups on all fronts, linking terrorist groups in general with the "axis of evil" and their conspiracy to destroy the U.S.[197] However, such lack of distinction between different Islamist "terrorist groups" further tangled U.S. policy with Israel by isolating the states that directly supported anti-Israel groups, such as Hezbollah and Hamas. Jihadi movements are far from monolithic, and al Qaeda differs greatly from

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[195] Hook and Spanier, *American Foreign Policy since Word War II*, 317.

[196] President of the United States, *The National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2006), 9-11.

[197] Hook and Spanier, *American Foreign Policy since Word War II,* 325.

most other Islamist militants. As Fawaz Gerges notes, "it is misleading and counterproductive to lump all jihadis under the rubric of al Qaeda and its affiliates, because they account for only a tiny minority within the jihadist movement…religious nationalists — a huge block within the jihadist movement—vehemently rejected al Qaeda's strategy and methods and broke with their transnationalist counterparts for good."[198] It is important to recognize the differences between al Qaeda and Hezbollah; Hezbollah has received much support from both Iran and Syria — subjects of this thesis.

While many Americans are probably aware of the Hezbollah of the 1980s to the mid-1990s, most are probably not aware of its transitions over the past decade. Hezbollah is not nearly as great a threat to the United States as that posed by al Qaeda. As Paul Pillar points out, while still very much anti-American, Hezbollah, "has not directly carried out a confirmed terrorist attack against a U.S. target since at least 1996."[199] Hezbollah references U.S. foreign policy as Satanic and cites the existence of an American-Zionist conspiracy to dominate the Middle East. At the same time, its leader, Sheikh Hasan Nasrallah, denounced terrorist attacks against the U.S., including al Qaeda's 9/11 attacks stating, "We reject those methods, and believe they contradict Islam and the teachings of the Quran, which do not permit this barbarity."[200] Mohammed Ayoob describes the differences amongst Jihadist groups:

> What distinguishes both Hamas and Hezbollah from al-Qaeda and other transnationalist organizations that carry our acts of indiscriminate violence is that their violent activity is restricted territorially and directed against specific targets that they consider obstructing their goals of achieving national independence or freeing occupied territory. Despite strong [U.S.] support for Israel, Hamas and Hezbollah have desisted from attacking American targets during the past two decades…both organizations fall well within the logic of the state system…more like the Irish Republican Army…than the al-Qaeda network.[201]

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[198] Fawz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 27.

[199] Paul R. Pillar, *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 34.

[200] "Hezbollah: "A-Team of Terrorists"," *60 Minutes,* April 18, 2003, http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/04/18/60minutes/pritable550000.shtml (accessed June 5, 2007).

[201] Mohammed Ayoob, "Political Islam: Image and Reality," *World Policy Journal* (Fall 2004), 8.

Shibley Telhami argues that while combating the tactic of terrorism is the right policy, one must differentiate between groups by their objectives — which shifts the debate from how they seek to obtain their objectives to what their objectives are.[202] This chapter argues that perhaps narrowing the enemy to those whose ideology is commensurate with that of al Qaeda , and those who attack U.S. targets, would better safeguard the U.S. from terrorist attacks.

While groups like Hezbollah and Hamas may threaten Israel, transnationalist terror groups like al Qaeda should be the main objective in the war on terrorism due to their unbending resolve to destroy America and the West. Al Qaeda's goals are unacceptable as it designs to destroy America, and attacks against the U.S. and other Western targets will only end when al Qaeda and like minded groups are eliminated or America chooses to "abandon the Middle East, convert to Islam, and end the immorality and godlessness of its society."[203] Whereas many argue the terror groups of Hamas and Hezbollah would whither after an Arab-Israeli peace, al Qaeda would not, thus few argue against the need to hunt down and kill al Qaeda. One question this chapter seeks to assess is whether expanded efforts to isolate Syria and Iran — for their support of groups primarily in conflict with Israel — negatively affects the U.S. war on terrorism.

D.   COMBATING TERRORISM: IRAN CASE STUDY

This case study on Iran will argue that the U.S.–Israeli relationship negatively affects our interests of combating terrorism. The U.S. not only classifies Iran as a state sponsor of terror, but states that Iran is the most significant sponsor of terror. The case study will identify U.S. claims against Iran for supporting terrorism. The case study will also present objective information that more fully explains Iran's support of terror. A brief assessment will be conducted to determine why Iran supports terror. The Iran case study will conclude with an assessment that the U.S.–Israeli relationship negatively affects our interests of combating terrorism in the Middle East.

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[202] Shibley Telhami, "The Contemporary Middle East: Some Questions, some Answers" In *The Contemporary Middle East*, ed. Karl Yambert (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2006), 269.

[203] National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 48 and 51.

The U.S. classifies Iran as a state sponsor of terrorism. The United States claims that, "Iran remains the most significant state sponsor of terrorism."[204] The State Department describes Iran as an impediment in the international efforts to combat terror and notes that Iran "backs Hizballah (in Lebanon), Hamas, Palestinian Jihad, and the Popular Front for the Liberations of Palestine-General Command, all of which are violently opposed to the Arab-Israel peace process."[205] The U.S. proclaims that Iran has "maintained a high profile role in encouraging anti-Israeli terrorist activity, rhetorically, operationally, and financially."[206] Iran is further described as playing a disruptive role in Iraq:

> Iran provided guidance and training to select Iraqi Shia political groups, and weapons and training to Shia militant groups to enable anti-Coalition attacks…The Iranian Revolutionary Guard was linked to armor-piercing explosives that resulted in the deaths of Coalition Force. The Revolutionary Guard, along with Lebanese Hizbollah, implemented training program for Iraqi militants in the construction and use of sophisticated IED technology. These individuals then passed on this training to additional militants in Iraq.[207]

Iran is further characterized as not supporting efforts against al Qaeda:

> Iran remained unwilling to bring to justice senior AQ members it detained in 2003, and it has refused to publicly identify these senior members in custody. Iran has repeatedly resisted numerous calls to transfer custody of AQ detainees to their countries of origin or third counties for interrogation or trial. Iran also continued to fail to control the activities of some al-Qaeda members who fled to Iran following the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.[208]

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[204] Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Country Reports on Terrorism* (Washington, DC: United States, Department of State, http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2006/82727.htm (accessed May 2007).

[205] United States, Department of State, *Background Note: Iran* (Washington DC: [2006]), http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3580.htm (accessed March 12, 2007).

[206] Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Country Reports on Terrorism.*

[207] Ibid.

[208] Ibid.

The United States' issues with Iran's support of terrorism stem from Iran's support of anti-Israeli terrorist groups, Iran's efforts to destabilize Iraq, and Iran's lack of support in the fight against al-Qaeda.

While Iran does support anti-Israeli groups and destabilizes Iraq, their support of international terror has subsided since the early years after the Iranian Islamic Revolution. States often exaggerate claims against regimes considered hostile, and the U.S. is no different. What U.S. official documents do not emphasize is that "the United States and Iran cooperated in Afghanistan."[209] Nonetheless, Iran has engaged in activities counter to U.S. national security interests, especially in regards to Iraq. Paul Pillar describes Iran's participation in terrorism prior to the U.S. 2003 invasion of Iraq as taking place in three forms:

- extraterritorial assassination of Iranian oppositionists;

- providing money, weapons, and training to groups opposing Israel and the peace process, or also to groups against the ruling states in the Middle East North Africa region and elsewhere;

- Iran's surveillance of U.S. overseas facilities and personnel believed to be precursors to possible future terrorist attacks in the event of plummeting relations.[210]

Critics of Iran point to the vast amounts of rockets Hizbollah employed in its war with Israel in the summer of 2006 as evidence that Iran is still supporting terrorism. Iran's support of Hizbollah is less arguable than the legitimacy of Hizbollah itself. The international community is not in concurrence on identifying Hizbollah as a terrorist organization. While the United States lists Hizbollah as a terrorist organization, the European Union does not.[211] Iran's support of terrorism, outside of the Anti-Israeli groups, has subsided in recent years, down from the height of its terrorist activities in the 1980s.

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[209] Baker, James A. III and Lee H. Hamilton, *The Iraq Study Group Report* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 52.

[210] Pillar, *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy,* 159.

[211] *"Persons, groups and entities involved in terrorist acts,"* Official Journal of the European Union, June 2006 accessed at http://www.statewatch.org/terrorlists/docs/EUterrorlist-May-06.pdf on June 2007. An amendment was made in December 2006 to the June 2006 EU terrorist list and Hizbollah remained absent from the list in the aftermath of the conflict between Hizbollah and Israel in the summer of 2006.

Perhaps the most damaging to U.S. national security interests is Iran's association with al Qaeda, which has been America's deadliest terrorist foe for the past decade. Lawrence Wright describes al Qaeda's connection with Iran as mainly through Zawahiri, who had connections to Iran in the 1980s while the leader of al-Jihad.[212] Wright further claims that Bin Laden had relations with Iranian-backed Hezbollah and sought their training. Bin Laden was impressed with their success against the U.S. in Lebanon in the early 1980s; he wished to learn Hezbollah's lessons because he wanted the two main Islamic sects to work together to destroy the West.[213] The 9/11 Commission Report states,

> In late 1991 or 1992, discussion in Sudan between al Qaeda and Iranian operatives led to an informal agreement to cooperate in providing support — even if only training — for actions carried out primarily against Israel and the United States. Not long afterward, senior al Qaeda operatives and trainers traveled to Iran to receive training in explosives.[214]

There were challenges to the al-Qaeda and Iranian connection because Bin Laden did not desire to alienate his Saudi supporters by associating with Iran. Nonetheless, numerous 9/11 attackers traveled through Iran in the two or three years preceding 9/11. However, the 9/11 Commission concludes that the attackers were unlikely to know their mission during their travels through Iran: "We found no evidence that Iran or Hezbollah was aware of the planning for what became the 9/11 attack."[215]

A stronger tie to Iranian direct support of terrorists who attacked U.S. interests is the Khobar Towers bombing of June 1996 in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, where 19 Americans were killed and 312 wounded. "The operation was carried out principally, perhaps exclusively, by Saudi Hezbollah, an organization that had received support from the government of Iran. While the evidence of Iranian involvement is strong, there are

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[212] Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 174.

[213] Ibid., 173.

[214] National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States,* 61.

[215] Ibid., 241.

also signs that al Qaeda played some role, as yet unknown."[216] The investigation of the Khobar Towers bombing revealed a possible connection between Lebanese Hezbollah and Saudi Hezbollah with the support of Iran.

> In June 2001, a U.S. federal grand jury indicted fourteen people in connection with the Khobar Towers bombing. Some are in custody and others are still at large. According to the U.S. Justice Department, thirteen of those indicted are connected to the pro-Iran Saudi <u>Hezbollah</u> terrorist group. The fourteenth is linked to Lebanese Hezbollah, also supported by Iran. The indictment makes clear, said Attorney General John Ashcroft, "that elements of the Iranian government inspired, supported, and supervised members of Saudi Hezbollah" as they planned the bombing.[217]

Although Iran's support of terrorism continues, outside of anti-Israeli groups and support of anti-American Iraqi militants, the last decade displays a decline in direct terrorist attacks against U.S. interests. Iran does have a history of supporting terrorist groups against the U.S., Israel and other Iranian adversaries such as Saudi Arabia. Nonetheless, Iran does not fully cooperate with the U.S. in the war on terrorism as Iran continues to support Hezbollah and is less than fully cooperative against al Qaeda.

There are a number of reasons experts point to in an effort to understand Iran's associations with terrorism. One reason Iran has historically been thought to support terror since its Islamic Revolution is that it seeks to export its revolution. This effort strains Iran's relations with its regional Arab Sunni neighboring regimes opposed to Iranian ideology. For Iran— in the aftermath of their revolution and in the midst of war with Iraq — terrorism "was the means whereby Tehran loosened the stranglehold imposed by the war with Iraq and the hostility of the Arab and Western states; and it served as a dire warning that any initiative taken against Iran would be followed by terrorist retaliation."[218] Iran's support of pro-Palestinian groups originates from a desire to export their revolution and to resonate with Arab Muslims against their perceived

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[216] National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report,* 60.

[217] *Saudi Hezbollah*, GlobalSecurity.org, accessed June 06, 2007, http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/saudi-hezbollah.htm.

[218] Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 129.

common enemy, Israel, and to a lesser extent, the United States. As Nikki Keddie notes of Iran's terrorist support, "It regards pro-Palestinian groups like Lebanon's Hizbollah as fighters against Israeli occupation of Palestinian land, who are using the only weapons available to nongovernmental groups, not as terrorists."[219] Iran's support for pro-Palestinian terrorist groups was also designed "to exert pressure on the West by holding its citizens hostage and creating a counterweight to the support given to Iraq by Europe and the United States during the eight years of Saddam's war."[220] Iran's support of terrorism in the Middle East was an extension of diplomacy by other means in an effort for power and regional influence. A similar episode is now taking place in Iraq and Afghanistan as Iran intervenes to continue instability in both states.

One of the current issues the United States has with Iran in recent years is its intervention in Iraq, which the U.S. claims has created greater instability and led to increased deaths of coalition forces. As Vali Nasr states of Iran's actions in Iraq today,

> Iran's strategy in this conflict is the same as it was in the 1980s: to focus attention on the anti-American and anti-Israeli issues, appropriate popular Islamic and Arab slogans, and avoid discussion of sectarian differences. This strategy worked for Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the Sadrists, inspired by Hezbollah, tried to implement it in Iraq as well.[221]

It is also believed that Iran is supporting various Shiite groups in Iraq to expand its influence in the region and to maintain a degree of legitimacy that ties up the United States military and reduces Americans' appetite for conflict, thereby, possibly securing the Iranian regime from another U.S. preventative regime change. Iran supports various non-government groups in Iraq to thwart the U.S. interests of stabilizing Iraq.

The case study of Iran concludes that there are negative effects of the U.S.–Israeli relationship in combating terrorism in the Middle East. The U.S. support to Israel provides legitimacy and sympathy to all groups who renounce Israel and support its

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[219] Nikki R. Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 284.

[220] Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam,* 128.

[221] Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), 241.

opponents. The Arab–Israeli conflict provides Iran a means to gain support in the region from the Arab street. This is true because the plight of the Palestinians resonates with all Muslims, whereas Iran would garner little support without the conflict. Groups like al-Qaeda and states like Iran can garner sympathy and support for their cause by pointing to the plight of the Palestinians at the hands of Israeli occupiers, who are supported by the U.S. The U.S.–Israeli relationship negatively affects the U.S. national interest of combating terrorism in the Middle East because it brings together Iran, Hezbollah, Hamas, and al-Qaeda — all of whom have some competing objectives — together to combat Israel and work against U.S. interests in the region. For all the grievances against the United States, the one that most resonates throughout the Middle East is the U.S.–Israeli relationship.

While the overall effect of the U.S.–Israeli relationship is assessed as negatively affecting its interests of combating terrorism, it does not necessarily follow that if the U.S. changed its policy towards greater even-handedness in Middle East relations that either Iran or Hezbollah would stop working against U.S. interests. Iran may continue to support Hezbollah even if there is an Israeli–Arab peace agreement between Israel and all of its neighbors; its support of Hezbollah transcend its hostility towards Israel. Hezbollah would continue to disrupt the pro-U.S. Lebanese government in pursuit of a greater political stake. However, an even-handed U.S. policy in the Middle East would further reduce the threat of Hezbollah targeting the U.S. Such a policy would further de-legitimize states and groups such as al-Qaeda that exploit Palestinian grievances against U.S. interests.

E.   COMBATING TERRORISM: SYRIA CASE STUDY

The case study of Syria and the U.S.–Israeli relationship concludes that the U.S. national interest of combating terrorism in the Middle East is negatively affected. Syria is accused of not aggressively attempting to quell movement of militants and arms into Iraq, and the U.S. claims Syria supports terrorist groups that prolong the Arab-Israeli conflict. Syria readily admits to supporting anti-Israeli groups in their fight against occupation and in defense of territory. Syria initially cooperated with the U.S. against the Taliban and al-Qaeda by providing valuable intelligence in the aftermath of 9/11. Intelligence support

halted with U.S. accusations against Syria for support of anti-Israel groups and for fomenting instability in Iraq by weakly securing its borders. Predominately due to Syria's support of anti-Israeli groups who have not attacked U.S. targets in the recent decade, the U.S. has lost a valuable ally in the fight against the ideology of al-Qaeda. The case study of Syria reveals that the U.S.–Israeli relationship negatively affects the U.S. national interest of combating terrorism.

Syria remains on the U.S. State Department's list of countries that sponsor international terrorism. Like Iran, direct involvement in terrorist acts by Syria in the past two decades has subsided significantly: "Syria has not been implicated directly in an act of terrorism since 1986, when Syrian intelligence was reportedly involved in an abortive attempt to bomb an El Al airliner in London."[222] More recently, UN preliminary findings into the assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri indicated that Syrian officials may have been involved. The U.S. maintains Syria on the terrorist sponsor list for its continued "…political and material support to Hezbollah and political support to Palestinian terrorist groups."[223] The European Union does not list Hezbollah on its list of terrorist organizations.[224] The U.S. also criticizes Syria for failing to stop foreign fighters from crossing into Iraq. While Syria is known to provide material logistical support and allow political offices in Syria for anti-Israeli groups, Syria is not a major player in international terrorism. Paul Pillar states that Syria has developed into a state that restrains international terrorism and keeps "its client groups from conducting operations aboard and prohibiting them from attacking civilians even in the Levant."[225] Hezbollah restraint in attacking civilians ceased during the 2006 conflict with Israel, when both sides had civilian casualties.

> According to the U.S. Secretary General, the Israeli bombardments and ground invasion into Lebanon killed an estimated 1,200 Lebanese, injured over 4,000, killed four U.N. military observers, and created nearly a

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[222] Alfred B. Prados, *Syria: U.S. Relations and Bilateral Issues* (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress, 11.

[223] Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Country Reports on Terrorism.*

[224] *"Persons, groups and entities involved in terrorist acts,"* Official Journal of the European Union, June 2006 accessed at http://www.statewatch.org/terrorlists/docs/EUterrorlist-May-06.pdf on June 2007.

[225] Pillar, *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 170.

million internally displaced people. Over 140 Israelis, including 43 civilians, were killed and over 100 injured, many by Hezbollah attacks using rockets.[226]

While the targeting of populated areas with imprecise munitions is not condoned, civilian casualties from conventional means tend to be seen as less morally heinous than terrorist attacks such as suicide bombing attacks against purely civilian targets. While Syria still backs anti-Israeli groups, its support of international terrorism has decreased in recent decades. In some instances, Syria has been a notable ally in the war on terrorism.

Syria has provided the U.S. with valuable support against both the Taliban and al-Qaeda. The State Department reports, "In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the Syrian government began limited cooperation with the United States in the global war on terrorism."[227] Stephen Zunes states, "Syria has passed on to U.S. officials hundreds of files of crucial data regarding al-Qaeda and other radical Islamic groups in the Middle East…[And] CIA sources acknowledged that 'the quality and quantity of information from Syria exceeded the agency's expectation' but that Syria 'got little in return for it.'"[228] The U.S. has acknowledged Syria's cooperation in discouraging public support for al-Qaeda and having provided intelligence that ultimately saved American lives:

> Earlier, on June 18, 2002, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State William Burns was quoted as telling a congressional committee that "the cooperation the Syrians have provided in their own self-interest on al Qaeda has saved American lives." According to a subsequent news report, Syria helped unravel a plot by an al Qaeda group in Canada to attack U.S. and Canadian government installations.[229]

Support from Syria in the war on terrorism has not lasted due to strained relations with the U.S.

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[226] Alfred B. Prados, *Lebanon* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 2007), 19.

[227] United States. Department of State, *Background Note: Syria* (Washington D.C.: United States, www.state.gov accessed March 12, 07.

[228] Stephen Zunes, "U.S. Policy Towards Syria and the Triumph of Neoconservativism," *Middle East Policy* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2004), 52 and 54.

[229] Prados, *Syria: U.S. Relations and Bilateral Issues,* 11.

Mark Huband writes that the war on terrorism has "brought together the most vehement Middle Eastern enemies of Islamism into the open as potential allies of the United States, among them Libya and Syria."[230] While Libya succumbed to Western carrots and denounced international terror and rolled back its WMD programs, no carrots were made available to Syria whose land, the Golan Heights, has been occupied by Israel for forty years in violation of "a series of U.N. Security Council resolutions demanding that Israel withdraw from them and cease its colonization drive."[231] While the Arab-Israeli peace process is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is worth identifying some background on both the occupation of the Golan Heights and some negotiations over a peace settlement between Israel and Syria. As Donal Neff states,

> Israel on 11 June [1967], one day after the end of fighting, began the process of colonizing the Arab territories by razing the Maghrabi Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem. On 15 July Israel quietly established its first settlement in occupied territory. It was Kibbutz Merom Hagolan near Quneitra on Syria's Golan Heights.[232]

The BBC reported in December 2003 that 31 settlements in the Golan Heights held about 10,500 inhabitants.[233] While Syria has offered peace and recognition for the return of the Golan Heights, Israel rejects "land for peace" in the case of the Golan Heights. Syria has offered Israel peace, security, concession of the June 4, 1967, border to allow Israel passage around the Sea of Galilee, and sovereignty over the water. However, Israel

[230] Mark Huband, "American Power and the Middle East" In *The Contemporary Middle East*, ed. Karl Yambert (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2006), 255-256.

[231] Stephen Zunes, "U.S. Policy Towards Syria and the Triumph of Neoconservativism," *Middle East Policy* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2004), 52.

[232] Donald Neff, *Fallen Pillars: U.S. Policy Toward Palestine and Israel Since 1945*, 151.

[233] *Golan Settlement Plan Under Fire*, BBC News, published online on December 31, 2003, and accessed on June 11, 2007 at
http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/33600

wanted greater concessions of land to the East of the sea. [234] Israel is also skeptical of Syria's sincerity in establishing a lasting peace and forgoing support of Hezbollah after an agreement. The negotiations between Syria's Hafez al-Asad and Israel's Prime Minister Barak, with President Clinton as facilitator, ended without an agreement. These negotiations took place during President Clinton's administrations, and he took the favored U.S. position as facilitator: "Clinton, eager to adapt to Barak's preferences, quickly restated that the United States sought only to be a facilitator, helping the parties reach agreement, but not seeking to impose its views."[235] Syria is a potential ally to both Israel and the U.S., and Syria has shown a propensity to be just that, as it was a "tacit ally" of Israel during "Israel's confrontation with Iraq."[236] It seems as though the U.S. has lost a potentially effective ally in Syria against its main threat, al-Qaeda.

The United States decided to isolate Syria in the aftermath of 9/11. What is arguable is why has the U.S. has chosen to isolate Syria. Some believe Syria's isolation, like the toppling of the Saddam regime, was due to the implementation of the neoconservative strategy of promoting democracy through U.S. hegemony and regime change. Others believe such actions in the Middle East were taken to secure Israeli

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[234] William D. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967*, 363. Hafez al-Asad was put off by Israeli Prime Minister Barak's request for additional land, when talks were to be based on former Israeli Prime Minister Rabin's platform that seemingly prepared to accept a similar offer excluding the land around the sea. PM Rabin was assassinated in 1995 before an agreement could take place and President Hafez al-Asad died of a heart attack three months after talks with PM Rabin ended. Both occasions were the closest Syria and Israel have come to a peace agreement, while other Israeli prime ministers would renounce conceding the Golan Heights. The political climate in Israel hampered both Rabin and Barak from finalizing agreements as many Israelis were still not prepared to concede the Golan Heights and the Israeli Labor Party of Rabin and Barak did not enjoy commanding mandates.

[235] William D. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967*, 360.

[236] Ibid., 331. This passage seemingly refers to Israel's strike on Iraq's Osirak nuclear reactor and Syria's siding with Iran during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s that kept Israel's most formidable threat militarily engaged to its East and heavily weakened as a result of the near decade long conflict.

objectives.[237] While the conclusion of such a debate is outside the scope of this thesis, noting the debate is valuable because it brings to light the fact that there are prominent policymakers, politicians, intellectuals, and government officials who believe that such policies are due to a desire to further Israel's perceived agenda in the region. It is these perceptions of the U.S.–Israeli relationship that further anti-Americanism in the Middle East, which is then exploited by Iran, Syria, and terrorist groups like al-Qaeda, to foment further anti-Americanism, gain sympathizers, and increase the pool of recruits for operations against U.S. and Israeli interests.

The U.S.–Israeli relationship negatively affects the U.S. national interest of combating terrorism in the Middle East because the U.S. has lost Syria, a valuable ally against the al-Qaeda threat. While U.S. policy to isolate Syria may be in the interest of Israel, it is also in the U.S. interest of providing the pro-U.S. Lebanese government greater autonomy from Syrian influence. The isolation may ultimately lead to Syria's capitulation on its support of anti-Israeli and anti-Lebanese government groups, which would further both Israeli and U.S. interests. The isolation of Syria may positively affect Israel and the pro-U.S. Lebanese governments in the long run. However, in the short-term, the isolation of Syria negatively affects the U.S. fight against al-Qaeda. This is true because Syria has ended its fruitful intelligence-sharing with the U.S. Regardless of the

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[237] Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 5th ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004), 510-513. Smith identifies the goals of neoconservativism in the Middle East and identifies U.S. government personnel who favored the hard-line Israeli political party, Likud's, political goals and noting how the two group's goals meshed in the Middle East. Allan C. Brownfeld, "At Last, a Debate about U.S. Mideast Policy-and Who Influences it," *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* 23, no. 7 (September 2004), 64, http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=676258641&Fmt=7&clientId=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD (accessed Aug 17, 2006)., 64. Brownfeld discusses how retired General Anthony Zinni and former Senator Ernest F. Hollings both believe the Bush Administration's policy in the Middle East was designed for the benefit of Israel. Morton A. Kaplan, "A Conspiracy Theory of America's Mideast Policy," *International Journal on World Peace* 22, no. 4 (December 2005), 77, http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1069385391&Fmt=7&clientId=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD (accessed Aug 28, 2006). Kaplan argues that U.S. policy in the Middle East under the Bush administration is due to neo-conservatism not the religious right or the "Israeli Lobby." Paul Larudee, "The Blind Spot in Criticism of U.S. Policy Toward Israel," *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* 24, no. 7 (September/October 2005), 17, http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=887968501&Fmt=7&clientId=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD (accessed Aug 17, 2006)., 17. Larudee, while stating that U.S. policy towards Israel lacks meaningful opposition, notes several intellectuals from both camps (neoconservatives and those who believe the "Israeli Lobby" drives U.S. policy) and concludes that U.S. policy in the Middle East is the result of neo-conservatism values and not the result of the "Israeli Lobby."

rationale for Syria's isolation, the perceived U.S.–Israeli relationship will be exploited by U.S. enemies; anti-American states and groups will use Syria's isolation as evidence of U.S. favoring Israel, which may ultimately provide greater support of anti-U.S. groups such as al-Qaeda and states like Syria.

F.   COMBATING TERRORISM: EGYPTIAN CASE STUDY

The case study of Egypt reveals that the U.S.–Israeli relationship has a somewhat negative effect on the U.S. interest of combating terrorism in the case of Egypt. Egypt is seen as a close ally with the United States in the war the war on terrorism; however, there is anti-Americanism and sympathy for al-Qaeda amongst the Egyptian populace. The Egyptian government has remained steadfast against Islamic militants and its support in the war on terrorism. Egypt is neither designated a state sponsor of terror, nor deemed as "not fully cooperating" in combating terrorism.[238]

While the U.S. enjoys the support of the Egyptian government, Egyptians are much less enthusiastic about American foreign policy and have openly displayed such displeasure. As Arthur Goldschmidt Jr. stated, many Muslims in Egypt and elsewhere, "applauded when Egyptian and Saudi terrorists hijacked American passenger jets on 11 September 2001 and flew them into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Egypt's government was appalled, but the reaction of the Arab street was that the United States deserved what it got."[239] Polls indicate that in Egypt, only 15 percent of the population views the United States favorably.[240] It is the resentment of the United States as a result of U.S. policy, along with other factors, that enables terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda to obtain support and recruits to its cause. The United States is not supported in the war on terrorism by the Egyptian populace, and the negative relationship adversely affects our efforts in combating terrorism.

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[238] Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Country Reports on Terrorism.* Venezuela is the only country (of those not designated state sponsors of terrorism) described as not fully cooperating in combating terrorism.

[239] Arthur Jr Goldschmidt, ed., *Egypt Under Mubarak* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2006), 219.

[240] National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States,* 375.

While the Egyptian populace has shown disdain for the United States, the Egyptian regime has been steadfast with its support against international terrorism. The U.S. has been paying for Egypt's support ever since the U.S. brokered Israeli–Egyptian peace accords in 1979. Despite Egypt maintaining only a "cold peace" with Israel and its lack of political reform, the U.S. has maintained a robust assistance package to Egypt for decades. "The United States has provided Egypt with an annual average of over $2 billion in economic and military foreign assistance since 1979."[241] The Egyptian regime has had its own Islamist militant issues in the past and has no reason to support violent Islamist militants now.

The Egyptian government supports both U.S. efforts against terrorism and U.S. efforts in Iraq. The Egyptian government has had success in dealing with Islamic terror in Egypt. Egypt and the United States have a shared concern regarding terrorism, and "Egypt can claim some experience with the subject, having defeated domestic Islamist terrorists intent on overthrowing the government."[242] International terrorists will not find a refuge in Egypt because "The Egyptian government's well-known opposition to Islamist terrorism and its effective intelligence and security services have made it less likely that terror groups will seek safe haven there."[243] The report further states that "the Egyptian regime provided evidence for counterterrorism cases in the United States."[244] There is some belief that Egypt's close support of the U.S. during the war on terrorism is also due to the U.S. support against Egyptian Islamists in the late 1990s. Steve Coll states,

> The CIA worked closely during 1997 with Egyptian intelligence and security services in a large-scale, multinational campaign to break the back of its violent Islamist movement. CIA officers seized a number of

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[241] Jeremy M. Sharp, *Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations* (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, i.

[242] Ibid.

[243] Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Country Reports on Terrorism.*

[244] Ibid.

Egyptian fugitives in foreign countries such as Azerbaijan and Albania and secretly shipped them to Cairo for trial.[245]

The Egyptian regime fully supports the United States in the war on terrorism regardless of U.S. support of Israel.

The case study of Egypt and the U.S.–Israeli relationship reveals that the U.S. interest of combating terrorism somewhat negatively affects the U.S. interest in combating terrorism in the Middle East. The negative relationship is not due to the Egyptian regime but due to the Egyptian populace, who dislikes U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and provides recruits for international terrorist groups like al-Qaeda. The 9/11 attacks depict how Egyptians can be recruited into international Islamic terrorist groups and attack the U.S. as a handful of the 9/11 hijackers were Egyptian. While the government supports the U.S. in the war on terrorism, the populace is anti-American and susceptible to recruitment in terrorist organizations for a multitude of reasons, with U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and U.S.–Israeli interests figuring prominently in the list of grievances against the United States.

G.   COMBATING TERRORISM CONCLUSION

The chapter on terrorism concludes that the U.S. interest of combating terrorism in the Middle East is negatively affected by the U.S.–Israeli relationship. The case studies of Iran and Syria both conclude that the U.S.–Israeli relationship negatively affects the U.S. national interest of combating terrorism. The case study of Egypt concluded that while the Egyptian government fully supports the war on terrorism, its population's anti-Americanism is greater due to the U.S. actions in response to 9/11.

The case study of combating terrorism indicates that there are several causes that lead to the conclusion that the U.S. national interest is negatively affected by the U.S.–Israeli relationship. The U.S. objective to defeat terrorism overall, vice focusing on the al-Qaeda threat, has hampered efforts to defeat the main terrorist threat to the U.S., al-Qaeda. Both Iran and Syria exploit the Arab-Israeli conflict to pursue their interests in the region that transcend the Palestinian cause. Iran desires to spread its Islamic Revolution,

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[245] Steve Coll, "Ghost Wars: The Secret History of The CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001" (2004), 377.

become a regional power, and to hamper U.S. objectives in the Middle East. While Iran may garner support for its defiance of the West and support to anti-Israeli groups, it does not follow that Iran would halt its support of such groups if the U.S. emphasized an even-handed approach to Arab-Israeli issues. The case study of Syria concluded that the U.S.–Israeli relationship negatively affects the U.S. national interest of combating terrorism because the perceived relationship provides the Syrian government with support against U.S. objectives in the Middle East. Again, in the case of Syria, it is not clear whether Syria would halt its support of anti-Israeli groups, especially its proxies in Lebanon, for Syria has an interest in maintaining a strong influence in Lebanon that will prevail — even after a Syrian–Israeli peace agreement. The Syrian case study also noted the potential strength in a partner such as Syria in the fight against al-Qaeda; before isolation, intelligence ties prevented terror. The case study of Syria further concluded that there is a debate over whether U.S. isolation of Syria stems from U.S. support of Israel or implementation of the neoconservative agenda. Nonetheless, the chapter concludes that the U.S.–Israeli relationship hampers the war on terrorism due to the exploitation of the perceived relationship by Syria, Iran, and terrorist groups to further their support.

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V.   CONCLUSION

This thesis indicates that there are some negative consequences resulting from the U.S.–Israeli relationship on other U.S. national interests in the Middle East. Each of the three U.S. national interests studied in this chapter concluded that the U.S.–Israeli relationship to some degree negatively affected U.S. interests of nonproliferation, spreading democracy, and combating terrorism.

While the methodology of this thesis has value in assessing the effect of the U.S.–Israeli relationship on other U.S. interests in the Middle East, it can only provide some insight on the effect of the U.S.–Israeli relationship and cautions against any overall conclusions. The future of U.S. national security and stability in the Middle East may depend on how the U.S. balances the interests of its relationship with Israel, proliferation, spreading democracy, and combating terrorism that are discussed in this thesis along with other U.S. national interests in the region such as regional stability and stable oil markets. The U.S. has an important interest in its long-time ally, Israel, and will continue to conduct relations in the region in a manner conducive with Israel's security. Nonetheless, this thesis points to a couple of national security concerns that are present in today's environment.

Many argue that the greatest concern for U.S. national security officials is the threat that terrorists with an al Qaeda-type ideology may become armed with a WMD capability and could then wreak havoc on the U.S. and its Western allies. An additional concern in the region is how the actors in the region (Israel, U.S., Arab regimes, West, U.N.) will respond to nuclear proliferation, especially in light of both U.S. and Israeli policy regarding the Iran's potential nuclear capability. The U.S. has defined Arab-Israeli peace as an objective, yet the extent of the benefits of such a peace on the U.S. achieving its other Middle East objectives is arguable. And even the extent of reduced anti-Americanism in the Middle East after a peace settlement is unknown. Nonetheless, many scholars and policy makers do argue that an Arab-Israeli peace would significantly enhance the prospects of the U.S. achieving its national objectives in the Middle East.

However, such a debate is beyond the scope of this thesis, for this thesis merely calls for greater debate on the U.S.–Israeli relationship on other U.S. national interests in the Middle East.

While this thesis has concluded that the U.S.–Israeli relationship and Israel's de factor nuclear program are not the main impetus to proliferation in the Middle East, there are charges of hypocrisy that challenge U.S. legitimacy in confronting nuclear proliferators. The main proliferation threat in the Middle East is Iran. Iran's desire for nuclear weapons lies in its desire for greater regional influence and in an attempt to provide a deterrent for its perceived main threat, the United States. The measured responses of the U.S., the international community, and Israel will need to be coordinated to ensure the least amount of disruption in the region, while simultaneously addressing legitimate state security requirements. Another concern for proliferation in the Middle East is Egypt. "During the ruling National Democratic Party's annual conference in September 2006, President Mubarak and his son Gamal announced in separate speeches Egypt's plans to revive its long dormant nuclear energy program."[246] While Egypt is a member of the NPT, which allows member to pursue nuclear energy for peaceful means, "Egypt admitted to failing to disclose the full extent of its nuclear research activities to the IAEA."[247] The international non-proliferation regime has yet to be successful in preventing a state having the necessary materials, expertise, and intent from developing nuclear weapons. While this thesis may highlight some pending international security concerns regarding Iran's current pursuit of nuclear weapons and the potential for Egypt to also pursue a nuclear program, it has concluded that the U.S.–Israeli relationship is not the main reason for the potential proliferation. However, the U.S. and Israel are likely to be the main responders to such proliferation.

The case study of democracy concluded that, of the three states studied, only in Syria does the U.S.–Israeli relationship negatively affect the prospect for democracy. The cases of Iran and Egypt showed the effect of the U.S.–Israeli relationship on spreading

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[246] Jeremy M. Sharp, *Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations* (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 16.

[247] Ibid., 17.

democracy to be negligible. The primary motivator for all three regimes is to remain in power and each regime rejects and prevents any political reform that would impede the incumbent's hold on power. Each regime maintains the political structure and necessary security forces to ensure the status quo. The case study of Syria concluded that the U.S.–Israeli relationship negatively affected prospects for reform due to regime opposition groups' inability to garner support from the U.S. The majority of Syrians dislike U.S. policies in the Middle East, especially U.S. perceived favoritism of Israel. Opposition groups in Syria are unable to seek U.S. support in challenging the al-Asad regime for they would lose credibility with the Syrian people. Effective political control coupled with robust security apparatuses designed to thwart political opposition, prevents opposition forces from becoming credible threats to the regime. Syrians relative universal support of the al-Asad regime in foreign relations is the limiting factor for the U.S.'s ability to effect political reform in Syria. The U.S.–Israeli relationship and corresponding U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East leads to anti-Americanism in Syria, which has the consequences of weakening political groups opposing the al-Asad regime and thus enabling the continuance of authoritarianism in Syria. The Syrian population's support of al-Asad's foreign policy implies that even democracy in Syria may not lead to Syria's renunciation of Hezbollah and other anti-Israel groups or a hands-off policy with Lebanon.

The chapter on terrorism concluded that the U.S.–Israeli relationship negatively affects the U.S. national interest of combating terrorism in the Middle East, specifically against al Qaeda. The chapter stated that the U.S. broad objectives in combating terrorism hamper the fight against its main terrorist threat, al Qaeda. The arguably less effective strategy of encompassing all Islamic militants into one category negatively affects the support of the Middle East region in the fight against terrorism. Anti-Israeli groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas, while their tactics are often called into question, their objectives have wide support throughout the region. By encompassing all Islamic militant groups together as the enemy in the war on terrorism, the U.S. has lost the support of a valuable ally against al Qaeda, Syria. The secular Syrian regime is a natural ally against international Islamic groups with al-Qaeda like ideologies. The chapter on terrorism did

make clear that even if Syria allied with the U.S. against al Qaeda, there is little reason to believe that it would halt its support of Hezbollah even in the instance of an Arab-Israeli peace. Syria has historical roots in Lebanon and one objective of Syria is to maintain influence with its unstable neighbor. Syrian influence in Lebanon negatively affects another U.S. interest, safeguarding Lebanon's Pro-West democracy. Similarly, Iran too would not likely halt support of Hezbollah in the event the U.S. pursues a greater perceived even-handedness in Middle Eastern affairs for Iran will still desire influence in Lebanon and the region. Iran will continue to work against U.S. interests in the region with the intent to secure itself from its perceived threat that the U.S. may militarily seek regime change in Iran. Anti-Americanism in the Middle East is exacerbated by the U.S.–Israeli relationship and U.S. foreign policies combating terrorism after 9/11.

While the U.S.–Israeli relationship is known to increase anti-Americanism, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is also a known motivator for anti-Israeli terrorism. The U.S. *Country Reports on Terrorism* states, "The Israeli/Palestinian conflict remains a source of terrorist motivation."[248] The chapter provided evidence that groups like Hamas and Hezbollah can moderate. As Ayoob argues, "The end of occupation, if and when it comes about, will fundamentally change this action-reaction dynamic [cycle of violence with Israel]. Hamas, like Hezbollah, will be forced to turn itself principally into a political party…"[249] Some U.S. officials are understandably anathema to believe such groups can moderate and even to consider peace with them for the memory of Hezbollah attacks against the U.S. remain vivid, for prior to the onset of al Qaeda, Hezbollah was the terrorist group identified as responsible for the most American deaths. However, states do make peace after horrific violence such as U.S. peace with Japan, and, U.S. military ships have even made port-calls in Vietnam. Despite groups like Hezbollah and Hamas being non-state actors, the U.S. can negotiate with such groups in an effort to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. The U.S. would be sure to emphasize the recognition and security of its ally, Israel, as its primary objective in any peace talks. While anti-Americanism in the Middle East stems from more than just perceived U.S. one-sidedness towards Israel, as

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[248] Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Country Reports on Terrorism,* 11.

[249] Mohammed Ayoob, "Political Islam: Image and Reality," 8.

Brezezinski, while citing numerous polls, states of Arab grievances that stem anti-Americanism, "the most evident is the Arab resentment of U.S. support for Israel."[250] As most Palestinians favor a settlement with Israel, resolution of the Israeli Palestinian conflict will further de-legitimize terrorist tactics against Israel and reduce anti-Americanism in the Middle East. Less anti-Americanism is liable to reduce sympathy for and support of al Qaeda.

This thesis does not question whether the U.S. should maintain support of Israel. The U.S. had an interest in maintaining steadfast relations with its allies. There is value in encouraging and supporting states with similar democratic values. The normative premise for such relations cannot be disregarded even if a more robust assessment of U.S. national security interests in the Middle East should conclude that there are greater consequences to U.S. national security as a result of the U.S.–Israeli relationship. While outside the scope of this thesis, the U.S. has interests in maintaining relations with friendly governments to display the resolve and permanency of such relations. The U.S. would likely have trouble finding everlasting allies should it be inconsistent with its support of its own allies.

While proliferation of WMD is of great concern, the combined threat of WMD in the hands of terrorists like al Qaeda poses arguably the gravest threat to U.S. national security. Bin Laden reportedly displayed the desire and intent to obtain weapons-grade uranium from Sudanese contacts in an effort to seek the capability to achieve mass casualties of the greatest proportions.[251] Such a concern highlights the complexity of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and suggests that the U.S. may be hesitant to implement policies that may align Iran with al Qaeda, thus marrying-up two of its greatest threats. Such scenarios further highlight the limitations of this thesis.

While this thesis identified some negative consequences of the U.S.–Israeli relationship on other specific interests (proliferation, spreading democracy, and combating terrorism) relative to the individual state case studies conducted, this

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[250] Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Choice: Global Domination or Global Leadership,* .52.

[251] National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States,* 60.

simplified approach has recognized limited value for addressing U.S. national interests in the Middle East. This thesis chose to neglect important regional interests such as regional stability and stable oil markets. What this thesis does accomplish is that it identifies that there may be negative consequences for the U.S. due to its support of Israel. This points to a need for greater discussion on the empirical consequences of the relationship on other U.S. national security interests in the Middle East to ensure U.S. foreign policies best protect U.S. national security. While the United States will always be closely allied with Israel and will keep Israel's security as an important interest, the effects of the relationship should not only be debated in the U.S., but the debate should be encouraged, frequent, and cordial.

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